

Tied to the Pendulum's Swing

**Memory, Narrative and Temporality in Graham Greene's
*The End of the Affair***

by

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To my sister Janne

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Chapter 1: Introduction

*Memory is like a long broken night. As I write, it is as though I am waking from sleep continually to grasp at an image which I hope may drag in its wake a whole intact dream, but the fragments remain fragments, the complete story always escapes.*¹

In the ‘Prelude’ to his profound study *Memory and Narrative*, James Olney puts his finger on one of the illustrative aspects of the twentieth-century writers. He claims ‘that an agonized search for the self, through the mutually reflexive acts of memory and narrative, accompanied by the haunting fear that it is impossible from the beginning but also impossible to give over, is the very emblem of our time’ (Olney 1998: xiv-xv). Olney’s is a study of the genre of autobiography, and thus it might seem remote to apply this quote as a point of departure in a discussion of Graham Greene’s novel *The End of the Affair*. As a novel, however, *The End of the Affair* displays many elements which are commonly thought of as belonging to the genre of autobiography, and as such I believe it is in keeping with Olney’s claim. The project and predicament Olney accentuates capture the mood and atmosphere of the novel under investigation here in a very succinct way. The main objective of this thesis will be to investigate, and hopefully illuminate, how memory and narrative are presented as two powerful complexes at work in this novel.

Born in 1904, Greene was thrown into what is widely regarded, at least in terms of European history, as one of the most violent and turbulent periods of all time. The wave of the First World War broke on the European continent with the gunshots in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, throwing its arms of impending doom around a disillusioned population. Nor did the interim period between the First and the Second War generate a sense of an optimistic outlook as the rise of fascism in its many various forms and the depression of

¹ Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life*, p. 25.

the late twenties ravaged a bleeding Europe, rushing in a devilish speed towards that seemingly inevitable shadow looming in the future. But if the period was marked with material decay, it is also true that it had its counterpart in art and literature, which, partly because of the surrounding decline, sought new ways and forms of expressing existence. In terms of British literary history, never before had so many acclaimed writers flourished the scene in such a compressed time span as the first two decades of the twentieth century. Greene, who started his literary career in the late twenties, had the rather dubious honour of writing in the shadow of such precursors as Conrad, Eliot, Joyce and Woolf. Presumably, it must have been like writing in an impassable vacuum, but out of it turned a style highly distinct of its own.

Looking back over the vast fields of Graham Greene's entire production, one is at once struck by the number of works Greene managed to publish and the many different genres with which he engaged himself as a writer. As well as being the author of twenty-five novels, he wrote six plays, several collections of short stories, four travel books, three books of autobiography, two of biography, four books for children and an extensive amount of essays and reviews. He was soon regarded a successful writer of compelling novels, appealing to an extensive readership, but the 'sense of doom that lies over success,' (Lambert 1994: 178) as he often put it, was always present to his mind. Many, myself included, regret that Greene never received the Nobel Prize for Literature, and perhaps it was this ghost, which often accompanies success, that finally played the decisive role. Of course, we will never know. These are merely speculations, and I am not so sure Greene regretted it as much as his adherents did, or do today. In an interview with Anthony Burgess, confronted with the question of when would he get the Nobel Prize, Greene replied: 'Yes, I was asked that question by a Swedish journalist. How would you like the Nobel Prize? I said I look forward to getting a bigger prize than that.' 'Which one,' says

Burgess. 'Death. Let's go and eat lunch...' (Burgess 1994: 323). In April 1991 Greene was awarded his bigger prize, and among the many people who paid tribute to him on his death was William Golding: 'Graham Greene was in a class by himself...He will be read and remembered as the ultimate chronicler of twentieth-century man's consciousness and anxiety' (Greene 1975: 1).

At quite an early age Greene came to view existence as boring and death as some kind of liberator. 'Boredom is another word for depression' (Heilpern 1994: 247), he once told John Heilpern. He spent his unhappy childhood and schooldays at Berkhamsted School where his father, Charles Greene, was the headmaster, soon finding himself in the midst of a conflict of loyalty between his schoolmates and his father. 'I was like the son of a quisling in a country under occupation' (Greene 1999: 54-55), he later recalled in his autobiography *A Sort of Life* (1971). When he later continued studies at Oxford, he played that dice with death invented by bored Russian officers at the turn of the century: Russian roulette. Later, travel replaced Russian roulette when he sought danger and death in countries in chaos and revolution:

it was the fear of boredom which took me to Tabasco during the religious persecution, to a *leproserie* in the Congo, to the Kikuyu reserve during the Mau-Mau insurrection, to the emergency in Malaya and to the French war in Vietnam. There, in those last three regions of clandestine war, the fear of ambush served me just as effectively as the revolver from the corner-cupboard in the life-long war against boredom. (Heilpern 1994: 248-249)

Greene's was a life 'on the dangerous edge' of things. He lived his life 'on the border,' a perilous area, but an area which proved to be pregnant with artistic and literary inspiration. Some of the results of his extensive travelling are *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The Comedians* and *The Quiet American*.

Another element, besides the sense of a longing for death, which was part of Greene's sentiment, and which became manifest in his artistic production, is what has become known as the religious dimension of Greene. At the age of twenty-two, three years before his first novel, *The Man Within*, was published, Greene converted to Catholicism.

‘And so faith came to me – shapelessly, without dogma, a presence above a croquet lawn, something associated with violence, cruelty, evil across the way. I began to believe in heaven because I believed in hell, but for a long time it was only hell I could picture with a certain intimacy’ (Greene 2002c: 14). Even though his faith did not manifest itself as an encouraging counterpoint to the seedy life surrounding him, it provided Greene with a certain measure of a fixed value, albeit represented ‘negatively’ by the idea of hell. It became a distinguished element of his works, particularly the works often referred to as his Catholic novels: *Brighton Rock*, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair*. The element was recognised by critics as idiosyncratically Greenean, and Greene was soon to be labelled a Catholic writer. Greene himself disapproved strongly of such an epithet, repeatedly claiming he was not a Catholic writer, but a writer who happened to be a Catholic. Nevertheless, he made a claim for the value of a ‘religious sense’ in literature. It was something he had admired in the nineteenth-century novelists and especially in Henry James.² ‘I think the religious sense does emphasise the importance of the human act. It’s not Catholicism, it’s simply a faith in the possibility that we have eternal importance. A religious sense makes the individual more important and therefore it helps to put the character on the page’ (Dennys 1994: 277), he once told Louise Dennys.

Among the four Catholic novels listed above, *The End of the Affair* differs quite distinctly from the others in that the story is told from a first-person perspective. To apply narrative perspectives as a ground for comparison of the novels might at first seem too narrow an approach. However, in my opinion, it makes a significant difference, particularly when considering the religious dimension of the novels. According to Grahame Smith, the difficulty for the novel of belief is that ‘[g]eneralisations on matters of dogma are liable to provoke a disabling failure of communication between author and

² In his essay ‘Henry James: The Religious Aspect’, Greene says it is the ‘religious sense’ which saves James’s novels from ‘deepest cynicism’ and lends the ‘importance of the supernatural’ to the struggle between the ‘beautiful and the treacherous’ (Greene 1969a: 50).

reader. And they may also tempt the writer into an ultimately delusive ease of statement instead of the attempt to embody his beliefs in dialogue, character and action' (Smith 1986: 107). I can only agree with Smith that the employment of the first-person narrative technique eases, if not completely, the difficulty of such generalisation. Thus, I believe it is fair to claim that the religious generalisations of *The End of the Affair* are much easier accepted than they are in the other novels, for believers as well as non-believers.

Another fascinating aspect of the first-person narrative is how it, more often than not, demands from the reader additional interpretative efforts since he has to implicate the narrative voice as one of the most significant elements of the story and the discourse. Furthermore, in literature, the first-person narration is frequently accompanied by what narratology has termed the frame of the narrative, and likewise, it demands special critical attention in an analysis of the text. In an examination of *The End of the Affair* it is therefore intriguing to investigate how the frame and the narrative voice contribute to the overall thematics of the novel. Having read the novel carefully numerous times, it has become increasingly clear to me, to use the words of Conrad's frame narrator in *Heart of Darkness*, that the meaning of the story is 'not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine' (Conrad 1995: 18).

A story 'does not expend itself,' says Walter Benjamin, '[i]t preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time' (Benjamin 2000: 16). Up to the mid eighties, most of the criticism on Greene adhered to a more or less thematic emphasis, with a particular interest in his religious and political preoccupations. Much of this criticism has partly pertained to what I understand as taking sides. In particular, as regards the religious dimension of Greene, several critics have found

it important to accentuate whether this mythical element is plausible or not. However, as theories of narrative have established themselves on the critical arena in recent decades, a number of critics have tried to investigate the formal artistry of the novels. It is nevertheless a fact that there has been a critical bias towards the former, creating, in my opinion, an unsound imbalance in Greene criticism. Unquestionably, part of the reason for this is Greene's putatively conventional fictional technique. It has often been more intriguing for narratologists to apply their theories on such writers as Joyce, Woolf and Faulkner, just to mention a few. It is fair to claim, I believe, that to literary historical criticism with its unspoken evolutionist bias, Greene has not offered himself as the most intriguing 'specimen.'

To make it explicit, it is not one of the aims of this thesis to argue a position for Greene among such formal innovators as those listed above. Since I intend only to investigate *The End of the Affair* as a more or less isolated novel, such a project is excluded by its own. Obviously, critics have a point when they maintain Greene's is a comparably less unconventional fictional technique, but it does not follow that an exploration of the formal properties of the novel is necessarily deemed futile. In terms of the two approaches above, the approach of this thesis will fall somewhere in between the two, although with a slightly stronger emphasis on the latter. There is a need also to specify that, to the extent in which it is possible, this thesis will abstain from what I above called taking sides. The present approach will be less concerned with the religious content as an expression of a Greenean metaphysics with which we can disagree or not. Rather, it will be an investigation into the concepts of memory and narrative as they run parallel with, and generate, the metaphysics of the novel at hand.

From the beginning of man, memory and narrative have formed two of the most vital elements of existence. There have never been stories without the existence of

memory, and never memories without stories; the two complexes are curiously intertwined. Before written language, for instance, it is a general fact that people recited, out of a 'collective' memory, stories and tales which proceeded from generation to generation. In this early ongoing swirl of recitation to storage in memory, and then back to recitation again, the pillars of culture found their dawning expression. The picture of today is still the same, only with the exception that we now are privileged of having a written language. Our existence, as well, is dependent on memory and narrative and particularly on three levels. First, we are endowed with a 'collective' memory which, broadly speaking, comprises the discipline of history. Out of this memory, we are, to the extent possible, able to define mankind and the various societal parts comprising it. Second, we are inheritors of fictional stories, handed to us either as written or spoken, which constitute a kind of cultural memory which allows us to set apart one culture from others. The British, the Norwegian and the Ethiopian cultural memories, for example, are to various degrees dissimilar from one another, and as such, they have partly generated different cultures.

If the two levels above are marked with a collective touch, the third level is highly individual. As human beings we use content stored in memory to define our own selves and to make existence meaningful. This is only accomplished by using the narrative scheme, as the American psychologist Polkinghorne sees it: 'Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a framework for understanding the past events of one's life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful' (Polkinghorne 1988: 11). In summary, then, memory and narrative pervade human existence in such a forceful and manifest way that it is easy to forget and neglect problems attached to the tangled and symbiotic nature of the two phenomena. Somehow, we often take their significance for granted. Fortunately,

however, problematic areas have not escaped the scrutiny of philosophy, psychology and literature. In various fashions those disciplines have tried to describe and delineate what they perceive as problematic aspects in connection with memory and narrative. As I address problems of the two terms in *The End of the Affair*, I shall in the main draw on narratology, but wherever I find it suitable, I shall highlight my discussion with elements from both philosophy and psychology. Now, however, I believe it is in order with a more detailed outline of the approach and the objectives of this thesis.

The objective of this thesis could roughly be said to be threefold, although it should be noted that the three parts interlink in very exact ways. In the first place, the thesis intends to investigate how memory and narrative are problematised as two complexes in the life of the protagonist and narrator of the novel, Maurice Bendrix. Memory and narrative are first and foremost intriguing because the story Bendrix tells is a self-experienced story narrated from a retrospective point of view. The discourse of the novel is continually jumping back and forth between the past of the embedded story and the present of the frame when the writing takes place. Each time the narrator writes about his present situation, he seems to engage himself in a dialogue with himself on this or that subject which relates in a specific way to the mutual acts of memorising and narrating. The present of Bendrix's situation comprises a situation of chaos, and I shall argue that memory and narrative are, to a significant extent, the causes for this. Applying St. Augustine's definition of memory, 'the present of things past' (Olney 1998: 7), I want to show how memory confronts Bendrix as a faculty which is not necessarily an expression of truth statements. For Bendrix, the problem is further enhanced when memory is transferred to a narrative form where language lacks the necessary transparency in order to depict the exactness of time and existence. As memory and narrative appear increasingly problematic, it is clear that Bendrix adopts a sceptical attitude towards them. However, this

scepticism cannot prevent him from continuing writing since all he has left, I will argue, is exactly memory, and this leads us to the second part of the thesis's objective.

By addressing aspects such as Bendrix's motivation for writing his story and the particular genre of what he is writing, I aim to show that memory is the only existential motivator left in an ongoing fight with the transcendental. On the most obvious level, Bendrix's account is a kind of autobiographical story which comprises an extensive period of his lived adult life, but when we investigate it further, a much more complicated and paradoxical picture appears. I shall argue that his story is at once a humble attempt to accumulate knowledge of the past, a diatribe against both time and God, and not least, a rather unconventional kind of confession which is accompanied by a sincere wish to atone. In much the same fashion as Bendrix's attitude towards his lover Sarah is continually shifting between love and hatred, so is his relation with God marked with a dichotomously arranged pattern of the same two extremes. Bendrix has come to an acknowledgement of, and a belief in, the powers of God. However, the recognition of God has not lead Bendrix to a situation of ease and relief, rather, it has left him in what he perceives as being a terrible, but unavoidable, predicament. He finds himself on a battlefield where he fights for his belief in human free will against his pressing doubt that there, after all, is no such thing, but only an infinite tide of divine predetermination. Within this vacuum, memory and narrative emerge as his only weapons against a God who intervenes in human affairs. Through memory he seeks to see himself as a self-defined entity independent of God, and by narrating the past he attempts to control time, for if he can control time, he must be the creator of his own self, and per definition self-defined. Nevertheless, he realises that his two weapons are only futile projects in the passing of time.

The third aspect this thesis intends to address is how memory comprises the structural and thematic centre of the embedded narrative. A rough delineation of the plot of

the embedded narrative is how the protagonist moves from a position as a disbeliever to a position as a believer. This transition, I shall argue, takes place in the psychic space of memory. In a comparable way to St Augustine's claim that memory is the location where human beings can perceive God, this thesis will try to show how memory constitutes the ground where Bendrix finds God. In a very specific way, this relates to the workings of external space, and in particular to the temporal quality inherent in space. In an encounter with space, memory triggers different temporalities, and in Bendrix's case, these memories are always memories of Sarah and, in the final analysis, of God. Concluding that God stands at the centre of his memory, I shall discuss how this aspect extends into the frame narrative and puts Bendrix in yet another predicament, namely his simultaneous longing for and postponing of death.

Commenting on the methodology of this thesis, I will do so by first applying one of Bakhtin's simple illustrations: that of two people facing each other in a room.³ Person A can see things behind person B's back which B cannot see, whereas B can see things behind A's back which are denied to A's vision. The things A sees behind B's back comprise the horizon of A, and what B sees behind A's back, the horizon of B. Although the two are essentially doing the same thing, they do it from different places; although they partake in the same event, that event is unique for both of them. Their places are different not only because their bodies occupy different positions in exterior physical space, but also because they regard the world and each other from distinct centres in cognitive time and space. Through the medium of language the two can engage themselves in a dialogue which enables them to construct the whole or the unity of their joint existence.

The analogy to an encounter between a literary text and a reader should be pretty straightforward. The basic difference, however, is that the literary text does not constitute

³ Bakhtin employs this illustration repeatedly in his works. Michael Holquist summarises it aptly in his *Dialogism*, pp. 36-37.

an active part in this dialogic encounter; rather, it is being activated by the encounter with its historical reader. Language is still the medium, through which the dialogic exchange of meaning takes place, and both the exterior physical space and time and the cognitive space and time play significant roles in this encounter. Of course, by these spatial and temporal dimensions I mean the historical settings of the reader and his cognitive position in terms of how he conceives of the world and existence. I shall return to this shortly, but first I want to look at some general problematic aspects in the theoretical framework.

In the last half of the twentieth century much theoretical work was concerned with whether meaning is situated in a literary work, ready to be extracted from its textual fabric as the ‘author’s meaning,’ or whether meaning is generated only in the interactive process of experiencing the work. Personally, I take a stance somewhere in between the two extremes. I am thoroughly convinced there is no such thing as the ‘author’s meaning’ only, and if that were the case, criticism would demand from us either to question the historical author, assuming he is alive and willing to answer, or to investigate his diaries, letters and so on, for evidence of what he intended. I cannot think of anything less inspiring than such a conception of meaning in literature. For me, literature is alive and generative; I cannot swallow the idea that a reader’s contribution to a text is completely unimportant and irrelevant. As readers, each of us brings to a narrative a different set of experiences and expectations, and it seems fair to claim that differences in interpretation can be derived from differences in personal experience and social understanding. However, it is also clear to me that works of literature do not come into being by accident:

They are intentional acts, produced by individual writers employing shared codes of signification according to a certain design, weighing and measuring the interrelation of part to part and parts to the developing whole, projecting the work against the anticipated response of a hypothetical reader. Without such control and design there would be no reason to write one sentence rather than another, or to arrange one’s sentences in any particular order. (Lodge 1990: 158)

The basic structural and thematic premises are already there when we encounter a narrative, but within those premises there is plenty of room for personal creativity in the construction of meaning.

As I return to the illustration above, I want to make it explicit that I find it at once both liberating and problematic to be a historical reader of my chosen text. By reasons just explained, my personal involvement with the text is legitimate and sustained, and I find it highly inspiring to encounter the text from *my* cognitive position in time and space. Yet, it is also problematic if I, as a historical reader, cannot argue a position for myself as the implied reader of the text. In methodological terms, this predicament is only solved by continually substantiating my claims with evidence from the primary text. Thus, I shall, to the extent of my abilities, let *The End of the Affair* speak for itself. However, similarly to the horizon behind each of the two persons in Bakhtin's illustration, there is, figuratively speaking, a horizon behind the novel under investigation here. By horizon, I understand a background of possibilities which can participate in, and thus contribute to, my dialogue with the text in a generative way. In the rough, those comprise other critics' observations on *The End of the Affair* and on Greene in general, different literary and narrative theories and elements from theories in philosophy and psychology. My approach towards memory and narrative in Greene's novel is to some extent interdisciplinary, although the emphasis is markedly on narratology. All the elements constituting the horizon are chosen with the specific intention of highlighting my discussion of the novel. To some length, they might be arbitrarily chosen, but as long as they serve to illuminate the discussion my application of them should be sustained.

To my knowledge, little criticism on *The End of the Affair* has been focused on how memory and narrative work as manifest complexes on the different levels of the story. Naturally, comments and observations on the two terms have been made in connection

with other approaches to the text, but there is still much unexplored territory left. If that were not the case, my approach to the novel would still be valid, I believe. As a story, *The End of the Affair* has not expended itself, to recall Benjamin's words, and if I did not believe I could bring a personal touch to my dialogue with that novel, I would never have taken on the project in the first place. I can only concur with Bakhtin that

there is neither a first word nor a last word. The contexts of dialogue are without limit. They extend into the deepest past and the most distant future. Even meanings born in dialogues of the remotest past will never be finally grasped once and for all, for they will always be renewed in later dialogue. At any present moment of the dialogue there are great masses of forgotten meanings, but these will be recalled again at a given moment in the dialogue's later course when it will be given new life. For nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will someday have its homecoming festival. (Holquist 2002: 39)

This thesis does not purport to be a 'homecoming festival,' but it is nevertheless my humble hope that it will provide its readers with some additional intriguing thoughts to the amount already existing. This thesis is an interpretation of *The End of the Affair*, and as every interpretive approach it

reveals something only by disguising something else, which a competing method with different assumptions might disclose. Every hermeneutic standpoint has its own dialectic of blindness and insight – a ratio of disguise and disclosure which stems from its presuppositions. To accept a method of interpretation is to enter into a wager – to gamble, namely, that the insights made possible by its assumption will offset the risks of blindness they entail. (Armstrong 1990: 7)

One of the difficulties with my approach to the novel is that the different facets of memory and narrative interlink in very particular ways, and yet I need to discuss them as if they were separate. As I proceed, I shall try to remind my readers of this linkage, and finally in the concluding chapter I shall hopefully be able to bring most of these aspects up to the surface and comment on how they relate to one another. I have chosen to divide the main part of this thesis into three chapters, and some brief comments on the content and proceeding of each chapter are now in order.

The second chapter of this thesis concerns in the main some general observations on time and space in *The End of the Affair*. Some of the important terms I will investigate

in this chapter are anachrony, memory, reflective space, dichotomy and experiential temporality. They will comprise the ground for the discussion which follows in the next two chapters. First, in a comparable way to much modernist literature, the novel displays an obsessive preoccupation with time. I shall start exploring its temporal structure by applying the Russian formalist concepts of *fabula* and *sjuzet*, linking them to the workings of memory. Second, I want to show how the spatial settings of the story have crucial artistic significance in terms of what I see as their reflective quality. The Second World War with its surrounding periods of peace and ‘the pursuit’ are external images, mirroring the interior actions of the characters. Additionally, space works to underscore the dichotomous prevalence of the novel. Third, time will be spent on what I have chosen to call experiential temporality, and by that I understand how the characters conceive of time. Attention will, in particular, be given to the juxtaposition of Bendrix’s and Sarah’s ways of regarding time. Sarah, I shall argue, seems to relish the present, whereas Bendrix desperately tries to avoid and control it.

My third chapter, ‘Memory & Narrative,’ will investigate how memory and narrative are presented as problematic complexes in the life of the writing protagonist. Doing so, I shall first perform a close reading of the novel’s opening. This is not only intriguing because it is one of the most fascinating openings I have encountered in literature, but also because the concept of beginning relates in a very peculiar way to memory. Besides commenting on the two opening paragraphs, I shall try to elucidate the title, the epigraph and the dedication of the novel and look at how those elements also connect with memory and narrative. Furthermore, I shall extract from the text elements and piece them together in order to reach an understanding of what Bendrix is writing and the underlying reasons which motivate this writing. This chapter will also start to investigate the function of God in the novel and address the existential opposition which is set up

between human free will and divine predetermination. Finally, I want to show that, even though memory and narrative confront Bendrix as problematic existential dimensions, memory is the only driving force left in his life, and that narrative is the only medium through which he can express himself.

Chapter four, which I have titled ‘Memory, Temporality and God,’ will explore how memory comprises the thematic and structural centre of both the embedded narrative and the frame. By applying two of Bakhtin’s ‘chronotopes of the novel’, the chronotope of the road and the chronotope of threshold, I aim to show how the former is the organising centre for the overall structure of *The End of the Affair*, and the latter is the organising centre for the embedded narrative. The elements comprising the embedded story present themselves to Bendrix as encounters on the roads of memory, and it is a construction the reader of the novel must make and keep in mind while reading. The embedded narrative is structured as an interior route towards the protagonist’s recognition of God. Bendrix finds God in memory, I shall argue, and a particular reason for this is the metonymical workings of space. More time will also be spent on God as a character in the novel, as he appears as Bendrix’s superior in every way. Finally, I will look at the dialectics between movement and stasis, as it is an expression of Bendrix’s predicament and the novel’s overarching sentiment. It is with this aspect in mind I have chosen to title this thesis ‘Tied to the Pendulum’s Swing.’

Chapter 2: Preliminaries: Time and Space

The Greenean 'Pattern' and a Modernist Detour

Until 1958 Greene made a distinction between his novels, classifying some of them as novels and the others as entertainments. Although his so-called entertainments are not altogether unlike his serious novels, it is typical that they are markedly identifiable by the emphasis on outward action, a comparatively less sustained sense of development in the characters and a pervasive use of melodramatic devices. 'The denomination, "entertainment" does suggest a relaxation of serious purpose' (Kulshrestha 1977: 179). 'In the minor works,' says Salvatore, referring to Greene's entertainments, 'plot seems to dominate, and moral, religious, or artistic questions, while often present, tend to recede in importance as the reader's attention generally becomes focused more superficially on *what* is happening rather than on *why*...situation, in other words, takes precedence over perplexing subtleties of motivation or self-development' (Salvatore 1988: xv-xvi). Contrary to the more intricate stories and themes in the major novels, which raise essential questions to ponder, the entertainments follow more consistently a pattern of suspense and then relief which leads to an easily accepted denouement, making the reader, to an extensive degree, less likely to get involved.

In the preface to *Three Plays*, Greene examines his engagement with the two 'types' of novels: 'The strain of writing a novel, which keeps the author confined for a period of years with his depressive self, is extreme, and I have always sought relief in "entertainments" – for melodrama as much as farce is an expression of a manic mood' (Greene 1961b: xiii). Considering Greene's oeuvre from a vantage point, one is tempted to

claim that this staggering, as it were, between serious novels and entertainments is firmly rooted in the writer's conscious or unconscious mind. The duality of his mind and writing – on the one hand, the entertaining aspect manifested through suspense and plot, and, on the other, for loss of a better term, what we could call the investigation into the truth of existence – seems, from a psychoanalytical point of view, to have evolved from his early childhood. 'Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives. In later life we admire, we are entertained, we may modify some views we already hold, but we are more likely to find in books merely a confirmation of what is in our minds already: as in a love affair it is our own features that we see reflected flatteringly back' (Greene 1969b: 13). In this often-quoted essay, 'The Lost Childhood', Greene explains how Allan Quatermain's *King Solomon's Mines* (1886) and Majorie Bowen's *The Viper of Milan* (1906) influenced him, and how the two writers thus had equipped him with a pattern for his future writing; namely the duality described above. Ultimately, in this respect, the interesting point about Greene's fiction is that while his entertainments, or thrillers, 'have an edge over most other specimens of the genre inasmuch as they have intellectual glamour, psychological interest and the air of social and moral questionings' (Kulshrestha 1977: 179), his serious novels are potentially idiosyncratic in their exploitation of paraphernalia typically associated with the thriller genre. Making use of such paraphernalia paved the way for introducing subjects and themes which normally would not excite an extensive readership. '[I]f you excite your audience first, you can put over what you will of horror, suffering, truth. This is still true and applies to the novel as well as to the film. By exciting the audience I mean getting them involved in the story. Once they are involved they will accept the thing as you present it,' Greene claimed in a 1969 interview (Phillips 1994: 206). The novel under scrutiny here is certainly not an

exception to the rule, in its serious treatment of a love-hate relationship which unfolds in the wake of a detective's investigation.

Further, one could claim that *The End of the Affair* is one of Greene's most 'modernist' novels; of course, only to the extent that such labels as 'realist' and 'modernist', in their broadest senses, are relevant and potentially fruitful. For instance, it is generally acknowledged that the novel bears a distinct resemblance to Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915) both in terms of subject and structure. '[It] is the most Jamesian of Greene's novels,' claims one critic, in its use of 'modernist' devices such as 'the sceptical narrator, stream-of-consciousness technique, flashback, diary, interior reverie [and] spiritual debate' (DeVitis 1987: 88). Indeed, when treading in this Harold Bloomian area, Greene would probably not object to or disclaim the almost too-apparent affinity with such writers. In a 1960 interview with the French Madeleine Chapsal, responding to the question of whom he admired as storytellers, Greene promptly replied 'Henry James, Joseph Conrad and a writer who is not well known, Ford Madox Ford' (Chapsal 1994: 145). As every writer and every new generation of writers must do, Greene and the writers of the thirties had to engage themselves in the Oedipal struggle of sons and their literary fathers in order to create something different; always being conscious of the marks and traces their daunting precursors left on their works. The novel's kinship to modernist literature should therefore sustain reasons for looking at different cultural and philosophical aspects in fashion during the modernist era.

In *The End of the Affair* one of these traces is the novel's almost obsessive preoccupation with time, an obsession which, to a considerable degree, is comparable to the modernist treatment of time. Albert Einstein's special (1905) and general (1916) theories of relativity had not only implied a paradigm shift in the natural sciences, they had also sparked a comparable paradigm shift in artistic articulation. His theories were

welcomed and embraced by the new generation of writers who found scientific support for their ideas of individual perspective. Peter Childs points out that the ‘tendency towards narrative relativity, before and after Einstein, is perhaps the most striking aspect to Modernist fiction, from Conrad and James to Proust and Woolf, in its use of perspective, unreliability, anti-absolutism, instability, individuality and subjective perceptions’ (Childs 2000: 66). Here one could add terms such as narrative and experiential temporality, or, even better, one could recognise that these are inextricably linked with the terms listed by Childs. In the remainder of this chapter, I shall explore the temporal and spatial structure of *The End of the Affair*, and start to link them to memory. Finally, I will spend some time looking into what I have called experiential temporalities. This chapter concerns preliminaries on time and space which will comprise a point of departure for the more in-depth analyses which follow in the next two chapters.

Memory and the Fabula and the Sjuzet

A potentially rewarding starting point when investigating time and space in *The End of the Affair* is to look at the temporal and spatial structure of the work. The Russian formalists made a clear distinction between what they called the *fabula* and the *sjuzet* of narrative. ‘The *fabula* is the raw material, the basic story stuff, the story as it would have been enacted in real time and space. The *sjuzet* is the actual narrative text in which the story is represented, with all the gaps, elisions, rearrangements, selections and distortions involved in that process’ (Lodge 1990: 147). The radical rearrangement of the spatio-temporal continuity of the narrative line, as it appears in *The End of the Affair*, would by the Russian formalists be described as the deformation of the *fabula* in the *sjuzet*. Maurice Bendrix, a professional writer who ‘has been praised for his technical ability’ and is the narrator and

protagonist of this 'record of hate' (7), sets out to construct, out of memory, his love affair with the married Sarah Miles, from the beginning to what he calls 'the end of love' (68). It is a story that covers the years from 1939, when Bendrix began 'to write a story with a senior civil servant as the main character' (10), to 1946, and the so-called *sjuzet* reminds one of a metaphorical comment Bendrix gives on Mrs Bertram's way of conversing; it is 'like the tube system. It [moves] in circles and loops' (162). Take, for example, the opening chapter, which, in matters of action, runs a course as following: 1) on a January night in 1946 Bendrix sees Henry Miles, 2) while walking towards him we get a relatively short flashback to 1944 and the destructions of the war, 3) conversation between Bendrix and Henry, 4) a flashback to 1939 when Bendrix got acquainted with the Mileses, 5) an episode a little later where Bendrix and Sarah had spent the night together, 6) back to the conversation, and so it continues throughout the chapter and the book, constantly rearranging the temporal and spatial elements of the *fabula*. Mainly because of the little clues Greene skilfully has placed here and there in the text, an attentive reader will encounter little problems when reconstructing the *fabula* out of the *sjuzet*.

One of the plausible reasons for this rearrangement may be that the text itself more or less explicitly expresses the workings of a mind in the act of memorising. It is of crucial importance that we notice that around three years have passed from the last events in the novel to Bendrix's act of actually putting it down to paper. Bendrix is therefore writing his story in 1949: 'I have a vague memory now, after three years have passed' (19). Again, I think ideas and idiosyncrasies in fashion during the modernist period may provide some useful insight into the discussion, and will therefore, before looking at particular instances in *The End of the Affair*, pay attention to some essential aspects of the thinking of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). Already in 1890, the year after Bergson's dissertation, Samuel Alexander hailed him as the 'first philosopher to take time seriously'

(Kern 1983: 33), and it is beyond doubt that his ideas were well known and established in British literary circles during the second decade of the twentieth century.⁴ Bergson made a clear distinction between the concept and experience of time. Opposed to the specialised conception of time, measured by a clock, which is employed by science, *durée* (Bergson calls it) is time presented to consciousness as an endlessly flowing process. Bergson's main claim was that a discreteness of experienced time is not real, and that we 'start from the experience of temporal flow. Temporal structure is not a matter of putting together given discrete items. On the contrary, so-called discrete elements are only apparent when we have a need to pluck them from our *continuing* experience' (Moore 1996: 55, original emphasis). As it is with a piece of music, 'any moment of consciousness is a synthesis of an ever changing past and future' (Kern 1983: 24), and if past were annihilated from moment to moment, thought would surely be annihilated with it.

It seems sensible to claim that memory, in the broadest sense of the term, to a great extent incorporates many of these ideas and indeed pervades the novel from beginning to end. When Bendrix leaves his lodgings 'for a drink at the local' at the second page of the novel, a memory from 1944 is triggered: 'I closed the stained-glass door behind me and made my way carefully down the steps that had been blasted in 1944 and never repaired. I had reason to remember the occasion and how the stained glass, tough and ugly and Victorian, stood up to the shock as our grandfathers themselves would have done' (8). Although this extract is an important proleptic allusion to one of the major incidents in the novel, and is therefore not elaborated on here – such an elaboration would run at the expense of the plot – it still underscores a vital proposition implicit in the story; namely that the spatial incorporates different temporalities. To put it slightly different, space becomes metonymical of different temporalities, not just a representation of the here and

⁴ Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism*, pp. 37-47. Here, Levenson points out how T.E. Hulme returned to England as a Bergsonian.

now. When I investigate memory more in depth in my fourth chapter, we shall see that this proposition takes on crucial importance as it partly leads Bendrix to a belief in God.

It is intriguing to notice that, even though the story is narrated in the past tense, there exists a kind of present in the story, starting from Bendrix's meeting with Henry in 1946, and it should alert us at once that we are dealing with a self-consciously skilful narrator whose manipulation of time is a reminder 'not only of his presence' in the book 'but especially of his prowess' as an author (Salvatore 1988: 38). To take the example above, if one accepts that there exists such a present side by side with the present of Bendrix's actually writing it, one sees the contours of the temporal complexities. The blasted stairs from 1944 are simultaneously pointing backwards to a past and forwards to a 'future' relative to the present of the story. Thus the scene is both analeptic and proleptic, but whereas the former is analeptic in terms of the *fabula*, the latter is proleptic in terms of the *sjuzet*.

The realisation of the two presents and the manipulating narrator adds a further problem to the discussion of memory. Necessarily, one needs to confront the questions: whose memory are we reading? Is it Bendrix, present as the character in the action, or Bendrix, present as the writer/narrator of the action, who is responsible for the temporal fluidity of the memory sections? There are, arguably, no straightforward answers to the questions. It is quite clear from the outset that in sections where Bendrix's discourse is marked off with the present tense, we see Bendrix, the author, self-consciously aware of himself as the narrator of the story, but in a majority of sections there seems to be a blend of the two. Obviously, Bendrix, the writer, makes his voice heard in these sections, first and foremost in order to generate suspense and mystery, the 'what happens next?' and the 'what happened in the past, and why?' (Lodge 1990: 146), respectively. Here, it is worth

repeating that we are dealing with a narrator who basks in the glory of having been ‘praised for his technical ability’ (7).

In addition, it is important to recognise that one of the reasons lying behind this subtle blending of ‘voices,’ or temporal dialectics, is that Bendrix, the author, strives continually not to give himself too much away. He is in many ways a reflection of the Dickensian Mr Parkis, the detective with ‘gentle apologetic eyes’ (36), who is hired by Bendrix to provide him with information on Sarah and her presumptive lover(s). Greene certainly invites us to discover and ponder that Bendrix’s act of writing is analogous to Mr Parkis’s detection. When, for instance, Mr Parkis brings Sarah’s diary to Bendrix, he delivers a sensitive and critically astute comment on the diary, a comment which stretches further than its textual surroundings and points to narration in general: ‘Of course, she may be very cautious, but my experience of diaries is they always give things away. People invent their little codes, but you soon see through them, sir. Or they leave out things, but you soon learn what they leave out’ (85). Bendrix has invented his little codes so that he is able to fuse his present voice with his voice as a character partaking in the plot, or as Mr Parkis would have put it; ‘for purposes of concealment’ (36). But Bendrix, for all his acclaim as a writer, is human and, like Mr Parkis, he has his share of ‘floaters’ (41), figuratively speaking. ‘It isn’t, when you come to think of it,’ he says at one instance, ‘a quite respectable trade, the detection of the innocent, for aren’t lovers nearly always innocent?’ (23). In matter of seconds he has forgotten what he has just written a couple of pages before, and thereby undermined the respectability of his own profession. In connection with how he got acquainted with Sarah and Henry, he writes:

Henry James once, in a discussion with Walter Besant, said that a young woman with sufficient talent need only pass the mess-room windows of a Guard’s barracks and look inside in order to write a novel about the Brigade, but I think at some stage of her book she would have found it necessary to go to bed with a Guardsman if only in order to check on the details. I didn’t exactly go to bed with Henry, but I did the next best thing, and the first night I took Sarah out to dinner I had the cold-blooded intention of picking the brain of a civil servant’s wife. (10)

Ultimately, it all adds to show that no narration is neutral. Although Bendrix is ‘writing against the bias because it is [his] professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of [his] near-hate’ (7), it is clear that he is ‘lost in a strange region. [He has] no map’ and has doubts ‘whether anything that [he is] putting down here is true’ (50). A possible reading is to see memory as this strange region. Memory is selective and, one is tempted to say, seductive in its temporal fluidity, and it certainly never follows any already-drawn routes on a map. To use one of Greene’s own titles, which somehow bears a significant kinship to the internal Conradian descent, memory is a journey without maps.

War, Peace and the Pursuit: a Matter of Reflective Space and Dichotomy

Since we have just touched upon Conrad, it may be worth mentioning that in contrast to the typical Conradian story, which so often dialogises an interior narrative with a political one, *The End of the Affair* does not purport to display such an interplay. In his Conradian reading of Greene’s fiction, Robert Pendleton disclaims the novel’s premise as a realistic novel because of its ‘*monological* insistence on the Catholic processes of faith and doubt’ (Pendleton 1996: 97, italics mine). Now, let us agree with Pendleton for a while on the monologic aspect he points to. There are certainly no socio-political implications/themes in the novel, such as would later appear in novels like *The Quiet American* (1955) and *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961). However, the absence of a political narrative, co-existing with the interior, should not make us altogether disregard the socio-political environment of *The End of the Affair*. After all, it has at least two important functions.

First, the environment has major implications for the development of the plot. To see this, we need only consider one of the most significant episodes of the novel, the climatic scene in terms of the mystery, when Bendrix and Sarah spend together the ‘first

night of what were later called the V1s in June 1944' (69). As Bendrix descends the stairs, one of the V1s explodes nearby and blasts the front door, throwing it towards Bendrix, who gets totally knocked out by the impact. Sarah finds him under the door, thoroughly convinced he is dead, and consequently she starts praying to the God she does not believe in to give Bendrix back his life in return of a promise to believe in Him.

Secondly, and arguably more important, the environment functions as a spatial, external image of the interior conflicts going on in Bendrix's and Sarah's minds. According to Michael Levenson, 'part of every fiction is physis, the elaboration of an external space, and part is psyche, the construction of an internal psychological space' (Levenson 1984: 7), and it is fair to claim that in *The End of the Affair* these two literally converge. Following the *fabula*, the relationship between the two lovers starts in 1939, a year characterised by a fragile and disconcerting peace, but a peace where 'hope' still is part of the vocabulary. 'We had started – that was the point. There was the whole of life to look forward to then' (45). But the shadow of the war closes in on them and the spring of 1940, 'like a corpse was sweet with the smell of doom' (57), suggest the destructive direction their relationship has taken. Bendrix even comes to regard the 'war as a rather disreputable and unreliable accomplice in [his] affair' (57). And, surely, it is unreliable: 'A week ago I revisited the terrace,' ponders Bendrix, 'Half of it was gone – the half where the hotels used to stand had been blasted to bits, and the place where we made love that night was a patch of air' (44). The war as the eraser of space reflects the loss Bendrix has experienced – the solid is reduced to a 'patch of air.' Finally, their relationship ends, the war ends, and an enormous vacuum, a status quo, a peace of unrest, filled with unanswered questions, enters the stage. What happened? What are we to do with the past? and so on. (It is interesting to notice that it is in this vacuum Mr Parkis operates and serves as a messenger to the unanswered.) The pattern of peace → war → peace could therefore be

interpreted as an image, an elusive background for events, mirroring the different stages Bendrix and Sarah go through.

Furthermore, the peace-war pattern is highly significant in the sense that it adds further substance to the dichotomous arrangement of *The End of the Affair*. An attentive reader will even on first reading be struck by the text's numerous instances of dwelling on opposing extremes, something which is a notable feature of Greene's discourse. It is characteristic of the discourse that it moves back and forward, almost like the tide, flowing and ebbing, between love and hatred, belief and disbelief, life and death, peace and war. An even better metaphor is given by Sarah, as she contemplates human consciousness in one of her diary entries: 'It's strange how the human mind swings back and forth, from one extreme to another. Does truth lie at some point of the pendulum's swing, at a point where it never rests, not in the dull perpendicular mean where it dangles in the end like a windless flag, but at an angle, nearer one extreme than another?' (110) Besides offering a brilliant metaphor of dichotomy, Sarah's contemplation displays an important preoccupation of the novel; namely the dialectics between movement and stasis. For structural purposes, I want to postpone a discussion of this proposition. As for now, let us pay some more attention to the area of space.

Although it has little to do with the political environment of the novel, there is another external space which, to a considerable degree, is intrinsically linked to the reflective quality discussed above. This is the space in which the pursuit(s) takes place, and inherent in the pursuit is the notion of the 'following after,' which somehow suggests spatial repetitiveness accompanied by a temporal delay. Mr Parkis, the most obvious example of this in the novel, pursues Sarah in actual space when he, for instance, follows her into the National Portrait Gallery and then into a church, or later, when Bendrix and Mr Parkis's twelve-year-old boy become his accomplices upon their visiting the atheist Mr

Smythe. The fact of the matter is that, once we accept this external space as reflecting an internal, we realise that *The End of the Affair* operates with a multiple number of pursuers and pursued, of hunters and preys, again emphasising the dichotomy of the novel. Suffice it to mention only a few: Sarah pursues Mr Smythe's ideology, Mr Smythe pursues Sarah's, Sarah and Bendrix are pursued by their consciences and by God, Bendrix pursues Sarah's route to belief, and so we could continue for quite a while.

Personally, for all its lack of a political narrative, I find the realisation of the reflective space intriguing as a powerful and illuminating tool which suggests and underscores the violence taking place within the characters of the story. Since the story is so explicitly subjective, I do not see that the absence of a political narrative should imply any inferior status to works where such a narrative is dialogised with the interior. Nor do I agree with Pendleton's disclaiming the novel's premise as a realistic novel. As we shall see in the following chapters, Bendrix is 'spiritually dead', and the only wish he is left with is a wish for complete annihilation. His full attention is devoted to the existential fight with God. Would such a man, we must ask ourselves, even bother to glimpse at the socio-political environment in order to engage himself with a political narrative? Personally, I do not think so. Pendleton, it seems to me, is too caught up in what he himself thinks Greene should have done with the novel instead of deeming its narrator as believable or not, and that is neither here nor there. The narrator comes across as realistic, hence *his* 'monological insistence' is not a qualification which disclaims the novel's premise as realistic. This said, let us now look at the subjective perceptions of time in the novel.

Experiential Temporality

The elusive questions surrounding the complex area of time have preoccupied Western philosophy throughout its entire history, and although they have mainly been the

prerogatives of philosophers and the cultural élite, the turn of the nineteenth century, accompanied by unprecedented scientific changes and innovations, carried in its wake a widened accessibility to such questions and a broader acceptance of individual perspectives on time. Time became, in the Einsteinian fashion, relative. ‘The clocks don’t agree. The inner one rushes along in a devilish or demonic – in any case, inhuman – way while the outer one goes, falteringly, its accustomed pace,’ reads a diary entry of the great modernist, Franz Kafka (quoted in Kern 1983: 17). Time is ultimately being experienced, and it is not necessarily given that we experience it the same way.

The End of the Affair seems to display an astute sensitivity to the matter in hand in its juxtaposition of what I have called experiential temporalities. It is particularly Sarah’s and Bendrix’s temporal experiences that are set up against each other, mainly because of the fact that they are the only ones whom Greene has allotted enough narrative space in which to express themselves thoroughly. The perspectives of other characters are handed to us either through dialogue or through a reporter (Bendrix or Sarah). In both cases it is important to keep in mind that no narration is neutral, and thus, we should neither take them at their word nor totally disregard them. A sceptical attitude usually proves illuminating in the end.

Of the two, it is Bendrix who spends most time contemplating and understanding the workings of time, which, when thinking about it, is not strange since it is he who is narrating the story. At all costs Bendrix seems to want to avoid the present. ‘I never lose the consciousness of time,’ he claims, ‘to me the present is never here: it is always last year or next week’ (51). Sarah describes him as being ‘jealous of the past and the present and the future’ (91), and I think that these two aspects, his avoidance of the present and his jealousy of time, should alert us to the underlying reasons for the particular structure of the story. On the one hand, the jumping backwards and forwards across the chronological span

of the action (the *fabula*) may suggest a motivation on Bendrix's part to control time. Time is seen as a rival in a battle of power, a rival who has stolen 'five seconds or five minutes' of his life and wakes him up in 'a changed world' (71). On the other hand, even though he occasionally lapses into the present tense (the present of Bendrix's writing the story), he never stays there for a long time and, thus, substantiates the claim that he avoids the present.

There is somehow a Greenean touch to the fact that Bendrix strives to control time in his narrative. In his first autobiography, *A Sort of Life* (1971), Greene considers the motive that has made him a novelist. It is 'a desire to reduce a chaos of experience to some sort of order, and a hungry curiosity' (Greene 1999: 9), and an extract from his travel account, *Journey Without Maps* (1936), could serve as an elaboration:

But there are times of impatience, when one is less content to rest at the urban stage, when one is willing to suffer some discomfort for the chance of finding – there are a thousand names for it, King Solomon's Mines, the 'heart of darkness' if one is romantically inclined, or more simply, as Herr Heuser puts it in his African novel, *The Inner Journey*, one's *place in time*, based on a knowledge not only of one's present but of the past from which one has emerged. (Greene 2002b: 19-20, italics mine)

In my opinion, it is crucial that we recognise that Bendrix's act of writing down his account purports to be an act of cumulating knowledge. It is his way of reducing the chaos to some sort of order, an order wherein he understands and can find and accept his place in time. 'I tell myself...writing this account of her, trying to get her out of my system for ever, for I have always told myself that if she died, I could forget her' (58). From the end of the book we know that Bendrix does not succeed with this quest, partly because of his rigid unwillingness to compromise with time. It is almost as if his story becomes a diatribe against time and, as we shall see later, in the final analysis against God.

The End of the Affair does not only portray the narrator's complicated internal encounter with time as a concept, and how he quests to control it, it also depicts Bendrix as

a character who, in his waveringly self-declared intellectual superiority, has trouble with accepting, and even looks down upon, other characters' conception of time.

I pushed the book across to him. 'Oh, it was written years ago. She wrote that kind of thing in a lot of her books like all children.'

'Time's a *strange* thing,' Father Crompton said.

Of course the child wouldn't understand it was all done in the past.'

'St Augustine asked where time came from. He said it came out of the future which didn't exist yet, into the present that had no duration, and went into the past which had ceased to exist. I don't know that we can understand time any better than a child.'

'I didn't mean...' [...]

Quite suddenly I lost my temper. I believe I was annoyed chiefly by his complacency, the sense that nothing intellectual could ever trouble him, the assumption of an intimate knowledge of somebody he had only known for a few hours or days, whom we had known for years.' (179-180, italics mine)

One is at once reminded of the old priest in *Brighton Rock* (1938) and his 'Corruptio optimi est pessima' (Greene 2002a: 246), Father Rank in *The Heart of the Matter* (1948) who emphatically confesses to Mrs Scobie, 'don't imagine you – or I – know a thing about God's mercy' (Greene 2001: 272); even the agnostic Doctor Colin, in *A Burnt-Out Case*, takes on the shape of a typical Greenean priest when replying the Superior of the leproserie, 'You try too hard to make a pattern, father' (Greene 1961a: 247). In *The End of the Affair*, as in much of Greene's fiction, the priest becomes a kind of oracle, meditating the predicament of human consciousness and knowledge, and in so doing, draws our attention to the limitations of human comprehension. Bendrix cannot accept that there is a limit to his perception of time, even less that his perception is being compared to that of a child's, and, consequently, in a moment of frustration and futility, he loses first his speech and then his temper. He trembles at the realisation of being at a loss, and it is worth noticing, I think, that Father Crompton's statement that 'Time is a strange thing' reverberates Bendrix's saying he is 'lost in a strange region' (50). The inter-illumination of the two statements underscores that Bendrix is lost in time, that is, the strange incomprehensible region of mind.

Contrary to Bendrix's attempt to escape the present, Sarah seems determined to occupy and relish it. Even her 'territory,' as Bendrix explains, 'her haphazard living-room where nothing matched, nothing was period or planned, where everything seemed to belong to that very week because nothing was ever allowed to remain as a token of past taste or past sentiment' (13), supplies evidence for such an assertion. Among the characters in the novel, Sarah strikes me as a quintessence of a modernist, that is, notably, in the most general sense of that term. 'She had no doubts. The *moment* only mattered. Eternity is said not to be an extension of time but an absence of time, and sometimes it seemed to me that her abandonment touched that strange mathematical point of endlessness, a point with no width, occupying no space' (51, italics mine). For Sarah, time seems to reach its apotheosis in the moment or the momentary, and Bendrix's words strike a sense of something distinctly transcendental, of something inexplicable, being part of this apotheosis. Bendrix experiences 'contradictions in time,' as opposed to Sarah, who for some reason is barred from such an experience in her existing 'on the mathematical point' (51).

This is also apparent if we again consider the motive of writing. In her comparative study of Kierkegaard and Greene, Anne T. Salvatore points to a vital proposition when she claims that 'like [Bendrix], [Sarah] uses writing to recreate the affair' (Salvatore 1988: 40). To some length, I am willing to accept and agree with what Salvatore says. Obviously, nobody would deny that writing about a past to which one once belonged is a kind of recreation. However, what really troubles me is that Salvatore blurs, and even equates, what I see as the different motives of the two writing protagonists. In my opinion, she partly fails when she claims that by 'recalling his own past affair with Sarah, Bendrix seeks to render it eternally present through his act of writing' (Salvatore 1988: 38). Arguably, the comment would fit Sarah's motivation much better than Bendrix's. 'I haven't the nerve to put them down,' Sarah records on the day following that fatal night in June 1944, 'but I'd

like to, because now when I'm writing it's already tomorrow and I'm afraid of getting to the end of yesterday. As long as I go on writing, yesterday is today and we are still together' (92). It is Sarah who seeks to render the affair, the moment, eternally present, while Bendrix, besides the wish to control time, seeks understanding in order to get the affair out of his system, or to put it slightly different, 'to discover if one can from what we have come, to recall at which point we went astray' (Greene 2002b: 21). As we shall see later on, however, Bendrix's motivation is more complex than this.

Sarah longs for and belongs to the moment, and it is therefore interesting to notice that it is she, and only she, who experiences an epiphany in *The End of the Affair*. One could certainly argue that Mr Smythe, substantiated by his conversion, must have had an epiphany, but that is neither explicit in the novel nor is it likely that his has been as momentary as Sarah's. His conversion seems founded upon a temporally developed revelation. Now the concept of epiphany is a slippery and complex one, and though I will not go into any thorough analysis of it here, I find that Henri Bergson offers a reasonable way into it. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903) he distinguishes between two ways of knowing. Knowledge, as furthest developed in scientific, analytical, and conceptualising thinking, where things are seen as solid and discontinuing, is different from 'absolute knowledge,' which 'is achieved by experiencing something as it is from within. This absolute knowledge can only be given by intuition' (Kern 1983: 25). Real truth or knowledge can, in other words, only be discovered through intuition, not analysis. 'The transcendence which "intuition" provides in Bergson's philosophy,' says Levenson, 'is furnished by the "image" in Hulme's literary theory' (Levenson 1984: 45). To this we could add Joyce's epiphanies or Virginia Woolf's 'moments of being.' The momentary is quintessentially modernist.

The epiphany in *The End of the Affair* occurs when Bendrix returns to his room after the explosion:

The door of my room was open and coming along the passage I could see Sarah; she had got off the bed and was crouched on the floor – from fear, I supposed. She looked absurdly young, like a naked child. I said, ‘That was a close one.’ She turned quickly and stared at me with fear. I hadn’t realized that my dressing-gown was torn and dusted all over with plaster; my hair was white with it, and there was blood on my mouth and cheeks. ‘Oh, *God*,’ she said, ‘you’re alive.’ (72, italics mine)

The irony of Sarah’s outburst, the ambiguous meaning incorporated into the signifier ‘God’, working simultaneously as an expletive and a vocative, hints strongly and brilliantly to the fact that an epiphany has taken place. With deliberate intent, I think, Greene has placed the tag (she said) after ‘God’ with the sole purpose of maximising the stress on ‘God’, making the irony and, consequently, the epiphany, the more effective. From Sarah’s retrospective point of view, we learn a little of what had happened: ‘and then he came in at the door, and he was alive, and I thought now the agony of being without him starts, and I wished he was safely back dead again under the door’ (95). The contradiction in the moment is only for Bendrix and the reader to see; for Sarah the moment is a moment of revelation, however painful it may be. When Bendrix recalls how Sarah once had said that she had ‘never loved anybody or anything’ like him, he contemplates her statement: ‘We most of us hesitate to make so complete a statement – we remember and we foresee and we doubt. She had no *doubts*... What did time matter – all the past and the other men she may from time to time (there is that word again) have known, or all the future in which she might be making the same statement with the same sense of *truth*?’ (50-51, italics mine) Sarah sees no contradiction because she is totally committed to the moment.

In conclusion, we have seen how time and space operate on some general levels of *The End of the Affair*. Comparable to much modernist literature, the novel’s obsession with the temporal and the spatial suggests a structural and thematic importance unparalleled in Greene’s oeuvre. Anachrony, subjective memory, reflective space and an astute sensitivity

to what I have called experiential temporality have been part of this. Still, there is a third position in terms of time and space which looms powerfully in the background, a position which belongs to a character 'occupying no space' (51) and existing 'outside time' (145), a character who leaves in his wake a sustained sense of friction and pain.

Chapter 3: Memory and Narrative

In his opening to 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of the Narrative,' Roland Barthes underlines the centrality of narrative in the lives of human beings:

The narratives of the world are without number. In the first place the word 'narrative' covers an enormous variety of genres which are themselves divided up between different subjects, as if any material was suitable for the composition of the narrative: the narrative may incorporate articulate language, spoken or written; pictures, still or moving; gestures and the ordered arrangement of all the ingredients: it is present in myth, legend, fable, short story, epic, history, tragedy, comedy, pantomime, painting, ...stained glass windows, cinema, comic strips, journalism, conversation. In addition, under this almost infinite number of forms, the narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies; the history of narrative begins with the history of mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives. (quoted in Polkinghorne 1988: 14)

If it is true that there never has existed a people without narratives, it is also certain that there has never existed a people without memory, for a people without memory would necessarily imply the impossibility of the existence of narrative. St Augustine's definition of memory might serve as well as any: 'The present of things past is memory' (Olney 1998: 7). In the light of the definition, then, it seems indisputably clear that narrative is dependently linked to memory. To paraphrase it, a human being cannot narrate his own present, only his past, and that is just another way of saying that he can only narrate his own memory. As we shall see, the intertwinement of memory and narrative is not unproblematic, though. In *The End of the Affair*, this problematic facet constitutes an almost unsolvable problem for the writing protagonist, and I shall address it in due course. First, however, it is tempting to afford a thorough exploration of the beginning of the novel, not only because it is highly interesting in itself, but also because it has bearing on problems connected with memory and narrative. Secondly, it is crucial to acknowledge that part of my problem will be to define the genre of the protagonist's piece of writing and to

look at what motivates this writing. Consequently, time and space will be offered to an investigation of those two aspects, as also those relate to memory and narrative.

Beginning and End

One reason why we find beginnings and endings problematic, and yet so fascinating, may be found firmly rooted in the fact that we cannot remember our own ‘entrances’ into the world, nor are we capable of telling/narrating about our own ‘exits.’ In his essay ‘Openings: Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* and Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger*,’⁵ which focuses primarily on narrative openings in general and specifically on the two openings of the novels of two authors who are esteemed among the generators of early modernism, Jakob Lothe links this problematic aspect to ‘ideas of beginning in history’ (Lothe 2002: 77). Drawing on an example from the Second World War because ‘[t]imes of war typically accentuate human beings’ sense of beginnings as well as endings’ (Lothe 2002: 98), he points to how these two temporal dimensions are intertwined, albeit in a curious fashion. Consider, for instance, the words of Winston S. Churchill, quoted in the same footnote: ‘Now is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.’ Since beginnings relate to endings and endings to beginnings, according to Lothe, ‘the problem of stating precisely when and where a given narrative line commences is highlighted’ (Lothe 2002: 78). This, together with ideas of beginning in history, lead us to one of the most salient human preoccupations throughout history, namely: where and when did the historical narrative line commence?

Since the second half of the nineteenth century the various attempts to answer that question have mainly fallen into two dominant groups if seen from a Western point of view

⁵ For my following treatment of the beginning of *The End of the Affair* I am indebted to the approach Lothe has applied in his survey of the opening of *Tess of the d’Urberville* in that essay.

– I believe such a generalisation over the subtle dissimilarities that might exist between the numerous approaches is in order since it is my intention to put emphasis on the ‘act of looking back’ itself and not on diversity and disparities. Now, the first and oldest of these is the group which accentuates a transcendental or mythical dimension beyond human beings, of which Christianity and the Biblical story of creation provide the most ready and natural example. The Book of Genesis is very properly regarded as the book of beginnings. As one exegete comments: The opening declaration of the Bible, ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’ (The Bible 1997: 1), ‘is that God is ultimate and prior to the universe, and that nature and man owe their being and continuance to Him. The “creation account” tells us as much about God as about His creation: He is a personal, sovereign, rational, moral being. The grand fact to which the entire Genesis narrative swiftly points is that the eternal God is also the God of creation, of conscience, of judgement, of human redemption and restoration’ (Henry 1960: 54). The second group, on the other hand, adheres to a scientific approach in order to grasp that great commencement, tracing human beings through an infinite number of random evolutionary processes back to the amoeba, and, finally, based on theories on the expanding universe, among other indicators, they explain its origin in the Big-Bang theory. For clarity’s sake, I do not imply that the one approach necessarily excludes the other and vice versa. Many do, indeed, find the two approaches, to a certain extent, reconcilable, and the scientific explanation is viewed considerably less threatening to adherents of a transcendental one today than it was at the time of being launched. Be that as it may, since it is my critical focus to discuss the problem of beginnings and endings, I shall before leaving this example point to what I believe is the most vital similarity between the two explanations.

Both the scientific and the transcendental approach correspond in their defining a specific moment in history when time and space, as we conceive of those dimensions,

came into existence. Conversely, tracing the historical line backwards, this moment denotes a point of temporal and spatial elimination, and as such, manifests itself as a 'curtain of ignorance,' figuratively speaking. The great human paradox, however, is that we cannot live blissfully ignorant of what is beyond that curtain. It is in human nature, in human cognition, the necessity to think and reason in terms of cause and effect, or phrased differently, to see and understand how different events relate to one another. This necessity in what we could describe as the historical narrative has a corresponding element in literary and personal (biography) narratives, namely the plot. Hayden White recognises plot to 'mean a structure of relationships by which the events contained in the account are endowed with a meaning by being identified as parts of an integrated whole' (White 1990: 9). The American psychologist Donald E. Polkinghorne considers plot in much the same way, claiming plot's function as an ordering of events into a 'schematic whole' by emphasising certain events' contribution to 'the development and outcome of the story.' It becomes even more interesting as he continues that '[w]ithout the recognition of significance given by the plot, each event would appear as *discontinuous* and *separate*, and its meaning would be limited to its categorical identification or its spatiotemporal location' (Polkinghorne 1988: 18-19, italics mine). There is a sense, then, in which the discontinuity of the moment mentioned above, the transition – note even how language, ('transition'), must capitulate since it is temporally and spatially loaded when approaching the 'curtain' from behind – from the inexplicable to the explicable, signifying a loss of plot according to White and Polkinghorne, is the crux of why we are simultaneously troubled by and fascinated with beginnings and endings. I have included endings since there is a reverse, though analogous, transition in that term from the explicable to the inexplicable. To sum up, as far as personal biography is concerned, a human being can neither remember his own birth nor his death; as for the historical narrative, the collective human consciousness

can not remember or comprehend beyond the specific moment of the universe's beginning, nor can it comprehend its ending, be that either a Christian apocalypse as described in the Book of Revelation or a scientific one manifesting itself as an inverse Big-Bang. As for now, my critical objective is to explore how openings and endings of literary narratives are comparably difficult, and as I do so my emphasis will be on how this problematical aspect is presented in the opening of *The End of the Affair*. In my next chapter I shall touch on some of the important aspects of the end of the novel.

Beginnings in literary texts have gained a momentous position in interpretation in the wake of the modernist period. I can only concur with Lothe that 'our interpretation of a given narrative beginning may reveal how we interpret the text as a whole. The linkage between problems prompted by a text's beginning and questions actualised in the literary discourse as a whole suggests that narrative beginnings are crucial both for the formation of narrative and for the thematics which this narrative serves to engender, shape and represent' (Lothe 2002: 78-79). James Joyce and T.S. Eliot were among the modernists who realised and actualised the potentially inherent problem of narrative beginnings in their literary production. Joyce's relatively late *Finnegans Wake* (1939) was idiosyncratically innovative in its exploitation of an elliptical beginning and an elliptical end which combine in order to give the impression of reading circularly,⁶ that is to say, to borrow the words of the persona in Eliot's 'East Coker', 'In my beginning is my end' and 'In my end is my beginning' (Eliot 1974: 196, 204). Thus an end presupposes somehow a beginning as does a beginning an end, and this should, unsurprisingly, lead us to the title of the novel under investigation here, for what is a novel's title but its very beginning. This may seem an obvious point to make, but since the title can elusively epitomise the problem

⁶ The beginning runs 'riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs,' whereas the end: 'A way a lone a last a loved a long the' (Joyce 1939: 3, 628).

prompted by the text, it is useful to remind ourselves that we have already begun when we start reading the first paragraph (Lothe 2002: 79).

Theodore W. Adorno perceives the title as a ‘microcosm of the work’ (Adorno 1992: 4), and as such, I believe he lends a fair description to *The End of the Affair*. Personally, I find that this title together with the novel’s opening paragraph comprise one of the finest fictional openings I have ever come across in my modest encounter with literature. Stripped down to its most extreme, the title consists of basically two words: ‘End’ and ‘Affair.’ Before I go on to analyse these, I believe it is in place to make some preliminary remarks about such an analysis. Undoubtedly, there is a difference between a first reading and a rereading of a novel, or for that sake, of any piece of fictional work, which has bearing on what we read into its title, arguably, also into its beginning. One is obviously more inclined to incorporate more into the title on a second reading than on a first, but I am also confident that, even as one goes along on a first reading, one constantly defines and redefines the title in relation to the discourse, be that consciously or not. Since it would be futile to account for the discrepancy between, for instance, a first and second reading of a novel – that would simultaneously imply answering the impossibility of where and when a first and second reading begin and end – I can only say that I posit my analysis below on a number of readings and close readings.

The first and most striking aspect of ‘end’ and ‘affair’ is that they both are intrinsically linked with temporality. The title makes us expect, and prepares us for, a sustained focus on an end of something, or on this something ending. Implicit in the title is also a sense of, even a presupposition about, a beginning of this affair, even though the emphasis is on its end. Particularly interesting, I believe, are the potentially ambiguous meanings of the word ‘affair,’ as they invite taking different approaches to the text. For my part, I shall reduce them to basically three: relationship, concern/subject, and

incident/episode. As we start to read we are not surprised to find that the story concerns a love affair between two of the main characters, and I am tempted to use Bendrix's words as he tries to convince Henry to let him visit the detective bureau pretending to be a jealous lover: we, that is the jealous lovers, are 'supported by the weight of literature' (17). It is almost taken for granted, in other words, that a literary narrative concerns how a fictional character relates to other characters and the narrative's given context. That Bendrix's and Sarah's relationship is epitomised by 'affair', then, is not unexpected, but there is a second relationship, albeit operating on a different level, which, in my opinion, is at least as important – that is the relationship between Bendrix and God. Since it is my critical intention to discuss this relationship in my chapter on memory and temporality, I will not elaborate on it here; suffice it to say this relationship connects more strongly to the other two meanings of 'affair.'

The second meaning, which I have labelled concern/subject and ought to be understood in the sense 'this is my concern,' tells us that 'affair' has a very personal ring to it. There is a sense in which 'affair' points to a specific personal and subtle space or dimension which I perceive as being that of memory. I have already pointed out in my previous chapter that Bendrix memorises specific events that happened between 1939 and 1946 at the same time as he is putting them down on paper in 1949, something which timely clears the path for the third meaning and displays the interconnection existing between the second and the third. Now, it does not demand much imagination from us to extend an understanding of 'affair' as incident/episode to a conception of the term as narrative. Curious as it is, the grand fact to which 'affair' thus points is a specific account, and that the mutually reflexive acts of memory and narrative, which consequently gain contextual, structural and thematic significance, have bearing on the interpretation of this account. I intend, for structural purposes, to leave memory and narrative for a while, as I

believe it appropriate first to continue my reading of the beginning of *The End of the Affair*.

There are two textual elements between the title and the text, however, which need to be explored briefly before I fully give my attention to the opening paragraph: a dedication and an epigraph from Leon Bloy. As we shall see, there is particularly one problematic facet attached to both of these elements, and that is the need to establish whose voice we hear, that is to say, who is responsible for them? This, I suggest, brings us into the highly attractive, yet complex, area of reader-response theory, as we embark on terms like 'historical author/reader,' 'implied author/reader' and 'narrator/narratee'. Wolfgang Iser was the first to put forward the concept of the 'implied reader' and, thus, succinctly put his finger on indeterminacy in modern narratives. As David Lodge paraphrases it: 'there is an inevitable degree of indeterminacy in all literary texts, due to the fact that the statements they make are not subject to ordinary criteria of verification and falsification, but there are also certain limits on the freedom of interpretation imposed by the formal properties of the text' (Lodge 1990: 146). As far as the dedication in *The End of the Affair*, 'To C.', is concerned, I find there is a blend of the voices of the historical and implied author and the narrator. Void of controversy is the fact that the historical author, Graham Greene, dedicated the novel to a historical person either beginning with the letter C or encoded as 'C.' Most likely, it was meant for Catherine Walston, Greene's lover and a significant influence for over a decade of his life following the Second World War. Norman Sherry, whom Greene selected to write his biography, and who is still writing on the last of the three enormous volumes comprising Greene's life, claims even, in his second volume⁷, that without Catherine '*The End of the Affair* would not have been started' (219). Be that as it may, a much more controversial claim would be my own, that it

⁷ Sherry claims also that the character of Sarah is to an extensive degree based upon Catherine Walston. For further references, see vol. II, pp.219, 259-261, 280, 336.

is possible to understand, alongside the explanation above, the narrator as the voice behind, and thus the originator of, the dedication, which could be seen as addressed to Christ. I am apprehensively aware of possibly crossing the ‘limits on the freedom of interpretation’ now, but let me first give an outline of factors I consider in support of such a reading. First, it is a curious fact that a novel, in one way, positions itself somewhere in between a real historical world and a fictional one, that is to say that on certain points – again, we see that this fascinatingly enough relates to beginnings and ends in the sense ‘where do the real and fictional world begin and end?’ – a novel is an intersection of the real and the fictional. Consider, for instance, the title of *The End of the Affair*, which in my edition, besides appearing on the cover of the book, appears again inside followed by a page with historical data, concerning publishing dates and copyrights. Even though the title is set apart from the fictional text by a page of historical concerns, then, it does not signal that the title belongs exclusively to the historical world and not to the fictional, but, rather, it displays the title’s belonging to both. And so I believe it is with a dedication as well, obviously, only as long as one can supply further evidence for it. As I mentioned in my previous chapter, and as I will investigate to further length below, Maurice Bendrix, the narrator and protagonist of the story, does not only tell us this story, he also writes it. Thus, being a novelist, ‘author of *The Ambitious Host*, *The Crowned Image* [and] *The Grave on the Water-Front*’ (182), combined with the fact that he is paying so much attention to the word ‘end’ throughout the discourse, make it probable that it is Bendrix who calls this story ‘The End of the Affair’. If it is likely, then, that Bendrix is responsible for the title, it is also likely that he could have dedicated the book to somebody, and since what he writes is, as I shall argue, a kind of confession, it opens up the possibility of this account being addressed, albeit in an indirect fashion, to Christ – hence, the dedication.

The second textual element, the epigraph taken from Leon Bloy, runs: ‘Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering in order that they may have existence’. There are basically two brief points I would like to make here. Reading the epigraph, on the one hand, makes the reader expect that the discourse will concern a transition, taking place in psychic space, from something not existing to a particular existence of it. On the other hand, the word ‘suffering’ sets the tone for what is to come, signalling that the story will border on the tragic mode of existence rather than on something else. Additionally, ‘suffering’ is recognised as the presupposition for this transition. Interestingly, then, the epigraph succinctly delimits importance to the psychic space, while it simultaneously, through its reliance upon a chain of cause and effect, delineates what kind of plot we can expect as readers. As we now continue to explore the two opening paragraphs, we do wisely to bear the title, the dedication and the epigraph in mind.

Bendrix starts his account thus:

A story has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead. I say ‘one chooses’ with the inaccurate pride of a professional writer who – when he has been seriously noted at all – has been praised for his technical ability, but do I in fact of my own will *choose* that black wet January night on the Common, in 1946, the sight of Henry Miles slanting across the wide river of rain, or did these images choose me? It is convenient, it is correct according to the rules of my craft to begin just there, but if I had believed then in a God, I could also have believed in a hand, plucking at my elbow, a suggestion, ‘Speak to him: he hasn’t seen you yet.’

For why should I have spoken to him? If hate is not too large a term to use in relation to any human being, I hated Henry – I hated his wife Sarah too. And he, I suppose, came soon after the events of that evening to hate me: as he surely at times must have hated his wife and that other, in whom in those days we were lucky enough not to believe. So this is a record of hate far more than of love, and if I come to say anything in favour of Henry and Sarah I can be trusted: I am writing against the bias because it is my professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of my near-hate. (7, original emphasis)

There is so much compressed information incorporated into this extract that it is exceedingly difficult to find a point of departure. Obvious points are pronounced, however, such as placing the narrative in a historical time and space and a ‘listing’ of characters we expect to play crucial roles within the story as the discourse proceeds. I have already

touched on several points connected with the setting in my previous chapter, so I see no need to repeat myself, but I believe some brief comments regarding the characters are in order. The opening signals quite clearly to its readers that the story is weaved around a triangular love drama, comprising the married couple Sarah and Henry Miles and the professional writer and narrator, whom we later learn is Bendrix. Even though we do not know exactly how this is going to unfold, we surmise that the plot somehow relates to the triangular drama and the cumulative problems generated by it.

The most fascinating characteristic of the beginning, in my opinion, is the narrator and how he draws attention to the heart of the matter when he thus starts by problematizing a story's beginning and end. Let us first consider what kind of narrator we meet in this passage, and as we do so I shall make use of some fruitful terms from narrative theory. Maurice Bendrix is a first-person narrator who, in addition to being a narrator, is active in the plot, 'i.e. in the dynamic shaping of the text's action, events and characters' (Lothe 2000: 21). The narrative distance, manifesting itself as both temporal and spatial, should rewardingly not be ignored, as Bendrix is writing his account in 1949. The continual fluctuations between what I defined as the two presents in the previous chapter could pragmatically be viewed as the dialectics between two different narrative levels. Now, narrative theory distinguishes between three different narrative levels which are structurally hierarchical, where the highest level is the extradiegetic, the intermediate the diegetic and the lowest the hypodiegetic. As for now, I will only be concerned with the highest and the intermediate levels since those two correspond roughly with my two presents – there is a need now to modify the one present, which I claimed started from Bendrix's meeting with Henry in 1946, to also incorporate what happened from 1939 and up to that meeting. The diegetic level, which relates to 'the dominant level of action' in *The End of the Affair*, merges then with the just-modified present, whereas the

extradiegetic, the level ‘right ‘above’ the action’ (Lothe 2000: 32), fuses with the present of Bendrix’s writing the account.

It is striking that when Bendrix disposes himself on the extradiegetic level, as he, for instance, does in the extract above, he very much resembles an authoritative third-person narrator who comments ‘above’ his story through a so-called meta-narrative. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that so many critical commentators on the novel have concluded that *The End of the Affair* is a kind of metafictional novel.⁸ Gray defines the term as ‘[f]iction about fiction, in particular novels which examine the nature of novel-writing’ (Gray 1992: 173). Ronald G. Walker, for instance, notes that the novel ‘is fundamentally concerned with the making of fictions’ (Walker 1984: 222), and Robert Murray Davis consistently claims that we, that is the readers, ‘witness [Bendrix] writing the novel’ (Davis 1985: 402). However that may be, I find it slightly misleading. Even though it is true that the novel Greene has written is about Bendrix the novelist, Bendrix is not writing a novel – as I shall argue below, what Bendrix is writing is more in the genre of autobiography – hence it is not a novel about a novelist writing a novel, and, according to the definition, not directly a metafictional novel. Of course, there may be, and I do believe there are, implicit elements of metafiction within this fiction about autobiography, or, ultimately, this fiction about memory and narrative, but those are only of secondary importance. The primary importance lies in the fact that the text – through, and because of, the extradiegetic passages – draws attention to the complexities of the simultaneous acts of memorising and narrating/writing ‘one’s own story’. It is thus a crucial acknowledgement that my overall approach to *The End of the Affair* is precisely based upon those extradiegetic levels as they are presented throughout the discourse. I shall leave this for a

⁸ Novels about novelists are common in twentieth-century fiction. Suffice it to mention Doris Lessing’s *The Golden Notebook* (1962) and John Fowles’s *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969).

while, as I go on investigating yet another fascinating characteristic of Bendrix as a narrator.

There is a sense, discernible in the opening paragraphs, in which Bendrix wants to come across as a reliable and almost objective narrator of this ‘record of hate’ when he tells us that he ‘is writing against the bias because it is [his] professional pride to prefer the near-truth, even to the expression of [his] near-hate.’ And it is certainly true that he generally speaks favourably about the two people he claims to hate, Sarah and Henry. But it is also true that he paints a picture of himself, which I am tempted to claim is less favourable than what it actually is. Bendrix does not hesitate to tell us about his darker human sides, his hatred and jealousy, or how his love for Sarah was not particularly novel, but possessive, destructive and egotistically motivated. At one instance, when confronted by Henry’s assumption that Bendrix must have been Sarah’s lover, we get, if not an evil impression of Bendrix, at least a shockingly cruel one: ‘you were her pimp,’ Bendrix tells him, ‘You pimped for me and you pimped for them, and now you are pimping for the latest one. The eternal pimp’ (67). Bendrix is thus so one-dimensionally focused on his ‘heart of darkness’, to borrow Conrad’s wording, that he does not tell us about such attributes as Sarah ascribes him in her diary; for instance, his courage and responsibility: ‘I thought of a new scar on his shoulder that wouldn’t have been there if once he hadn’t tried to protect another man’s body from a falling wall. He didn’t tell me why he was in hospital those three days: Henry told me. That scar was *part of his character* as much as his jealousy’ (110, italics mine). In one sense, then, Bendrix seems to be extremely honest – we could even label him too reliable – as a narrator, something which at first sight seems to run contrary to what I said in the second chapter about Bendrix trying not to give himself too much away. However, I find the two arguments perfectly compatible since they relate to different aspects of his story and narration. While his honesty relates to the particular genre

of what Bendrix is writing and his motivation for doing so, his sustained attempt not to give himself away pertains to the fact that he is a novelist. Thus I believe Greene has created a very complex and, in this respect, almost a paradoxical narrator for his novel, who suitably embraces the numerous paradoxes portrayed within the text.

Another peculiar feature of the opening paragraphs, which also relates to Bendrix as a paradoxical narrator, is the repeated emphasis on powerful human emotions like hate and love. In the second paragraph only, hate is mentioned seven times and love once. David Lodge has even bothered to give a rough statistical record of the occurrences of 'love' and 'hate' in the entire novel, claiming 'these words or forms of them recur about three hundred and one hundred times respectively.' I can only concur with him that the 'effect is not monotonous because Greene is continually exploring new dimensions and interrelationships of love, hate, and the mixture of love and hate that is jealousy' (Lodge 1966: 34). Be that as it may, what we as readers need to ask ourselves is: how is it possible, or is it even possible at all, to simultaneously be so emotionally engaged in the story and 'writing against the bias?' This, I suggest, could rewardingly be considered in the light of what narrative theory has termed *attitudinal distance* of the narrator. Lothe understands 'attitude' as 'the narrator's level of insight, judgements, and values.' Furthermore, '[attitudinal distance] may also be a helpful term in discussions of the narrator's position and function in relation to the intention and value system of the text' (Lothe 2000: 36), of which necessarily the implied author is responsible. The intriguing point, however, is that when we encounter an unreliable, or as in our case, a too reliable, narrator, a discrepancy may arise between the narrator's and the implied author's value systems, consequently making interpretation the more difficult. One example of this effect, which has received a lot of critical attention over the years, is the characterisation of Sarah. Bendrix does indeed describe her in favourable terms, culminating in 'all I know is that in spite of her mistakes

and her unreliability, she was better than most' (131), but being entangled in emotions of love, hate and jealousy, we really wonder if Bendrix sees her for what she was. Ian Gregor, for one, recognises an undertone in Sarah 'which reveals a curious amoral indifference' (Gregor 1973:115), and a sense that she is a human being 'without conscience' (Gregor 1973: 116), and personally I have to say I agree more with Gregor than I do with Evelyn Waugh, who, quoted at the back of my edition, claims that 'the heroine is consistently lovable.' Anyway, as we shall see below, this discrepancy between the two value systems will form part of the problem when I shall try to define what Bendrix is actually writing, but first let us finish the discussion about the opening paragraphs.

What Bendrix does when he starts his account, stating that '[a] story has no beginning or end', is partly to draw our attention to the arbitrariness of a story's beginning. It is indeed concurrent with Lothe's comment that 'although all narratives must necessarily begin somewhere, and at a given point in time, there is a sense in which any beginning is coincidental, chosen rather than real' (Lothe 2002: 78). Obviously, Bendrix could have chosen several other points of departure for his account such as his striking up an acquaintance with the Mileses in 1939, or for that sake, he could even have gone as far back as to Sarah's writing in her childhood books several years before their chance meeting – another beginning would not necessarily imply a poorer plot as regards mystery and suspense. This said, it is important to recognise Bendrix's emphasis on the arbitrariness of the '*moment of experience* from which to look back or from which to look ahead' as a significant facet of the workings of memory (italics mine). I want to explain this by drawing on something I repeatedly experience in my everyday life. When I tell somebody about a past experience or past incident – that is, of course, a memory – I not only find that I begin my account differently than on other occasions when I have told the same story, but I also find that when I have started, I sometimes need to go back beyond

that starting point in order to clarify something which has bearing on what is to come. There is naturally a linkage here between this and the need, mentioned earlier, to understand a story in terms of cause and effect, and consequently a narrative's beginning parallels the historical and biographical beginnings I pointed to earlier on in this chapter. But the intriguing and significant point is that when we, through our selves, remember and recite a memory, it is more probable that our beginnings are arbitrary rather than consciously chosen. Anyhow, in the opening passage of *The End of the Affair* there is yet another dimension accentuated in connection with its 'arbitrary' opening, which I now shall move on to explore.

God is introduced as a transcendental but apprehensively intervening force in human lives, a personal force who can intrude upon both memory and narrative. Even though Bendrix's beginning is 'correct according to the rules of [his] craft', even if his beginning is arbitrary somehow or another, there is still a nagging doubt on Bendrix's behalf that this specific beginning is not chosen or willed, at least not from his side. '[D]id these images choose me?' ponders Bendrix as he wonders if it is not as plausible to believe in a God, 'a hand, plucking at [his] elbow' with the suggestion and direction: begin here! Thus Bendrix – and ultimately Greene through his narrator – effectively set up an existential opposition between human free will and divine predetermination. The brilliance of both the implied author and the narrator, however, is that they make this opposition work on two different, though elusively intersecting, levels, culminating in the words; "Speak to him: he hasn't seen you yet." First, on the narrative level, that is to say, Bendrix's story as a written narrative, Bendrix opens up the possibility that it is God who wills the narrative to begin precisely with his meeting with Henry in 1946. Secondly, on the level of memory, there is a retrospective doubt, manifesting itself exactly through memory, that he did not by his own will choose to speak to Henry, but that also this was

willed and predetermined by God. There is a sense, then, in which both the story and the process of narrating the story have significant existential importance, and if Franz Stanzel is correct in asserting that ‘for an embodied narrator,’ that is a first-person narrator, the motivation for narrating ‘is existential; it is directly connected with his practical experiences, with the joys and sorrows he has experienced, with his moods and needs’ (Stanzel 1986: 93), this aspect is much enforced in *The End of the Affair*.

If we accept that there is such an existential opposition at work in the novel, there is an entailed facet which demands explicit attention when reading. A word like ‘arbitrary’, which first appears in the opening passage and thus suggests interpretive significance, and words in the similar fashion, like ‘accidental’ and ‘coincidental’, turn up continuously in the discourse, accentuating exactly this existential opposition. These words, as they crop up, need to be given special attention. Here we could mention Bendrix’s accident which nearly kills him and many other examples, but instead of listing them, let us consider one incident towards the end of the book which dwells on the word ‘coincidence.’ After a meeting with Sarah’s mother Henry is troubled about not giving Sarah a proper funeral:

‘It’s an extraordinary coincidence, isn’t it? Baptized at two years old, and then beginning to go back to what you can’t even remember...It’s like an infection.’
‘It’s what you say, an odd coincidence.’...‘I’ve known stranger coincidences,’ I went on. During the last year, Henry, I’ve been so bored I’ve even collected car numbers. That teaches you about coincidences. Ten thousand possible numbers and God knows how many combinations, and yet over and over again I’ve seen two cars with the same figures side by side in a traffic block.’
‘Yes. I suppose it works that way.’
‘I’ll never lose my faith in coincidence, Henry.’ (187-188)

Now, we cannot be impartial and uninvolved with plot in general, and specifically not with a conception of plot in our own lives – confront White’s and Polkinghorne’s definitions of plot above (p. 42) – and analogously we cannot stay remote and uncommitted to a word like ‘coincidence;’ we need to take a stance. Is a coincidence merely a coincidence, or are there forces behind or within a coincidence, explicable or not, and of existential importance, which form an ‘alternative to “coincidence”’ (189), to use Bendrix’s own

words? In this passage we meet a Bendrix who is so strongly attached to the word that he despairingly confesses faith in it. But we also know, from the opening passage, that Bendrix has renounced this faith and replaced it with a faith in the alternative, which is God. ('that other, in whom in those days we were lucky enough not to believe'). Thinking in terms of the epigraph, then, and its specific attention to a transition taking place, the beginning of *The End of the Affair* signals that the novel will be concerned with what led Bendrix from a position as a disbeliever to a position as a believer.

The main part of this chapter so far has attempted to expose some of the significant elements we encounter in the novel's beginning. The interpretatively rich opening of *The End of the Affair* offers several other points on which I have not touched at all. Frank Kermode, for instance, recognises many other vital features which he finds germinal in the first page of the novel; he even puts his finger on sentences contained in the opening passage which are crucial to Greene's entire oeuvre (Kermode 1987: 41-42). However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to comment on all of those, as I have mainly delimited my focus to beginning in relation to memory and narrative. I am also aware of the fact that this relation has been present more through implication, rather than conscious argument so far, but I intend to let it be fully embraced by the argument towards the end of this chapter. First, however, I would like to take a fruitful detour by investigating Bendrix's motivation for writing and addressing the specific nature of what he is writing.

Motivation and Genre

'A detective must find it as important as a novelist,' says Bendrix in one of the extradiegetic passages, 'to amass his trivial material before picking out the right clue. But how difficult that picking out is – the release of the real subject' (25). When I now proceed

to explore motivation and genre I am conscious of confronting exactly the same dilemma. Before we can infer anything at all, we need to amass from the text, in particular from the extradiegetic levels of narrative, the significant elements which, subsequently, must be pieced together in order to reach a broader understanding of those two complexes. What will comprise part of the problem is the fact that motivation and genre – including memory and narrative – are curiously and inevitably intertwined, and yet I need to discuss them separately. When possible, however, I shall try to comment on this linkage as I proceed, and finally, towards the end of this section, I shall bring the two together. As for now, let us start by looking at the nature of Bendrix's piece of writing.

There is an intellectual excitement pertaining to the way the implied reader needs to interpret the discrepancy, mentioned above, between the text's and the narrator's value systems, particularly when investigating the matter in hand. In *The End of the Affair*, a repetitive feature of Bendrix's extradiegetic passages is his attempts to define what he is writing. His definitions should neither be regarded as satisfactory – some of them stand even out as obvious contradictions – nor should they be dismissed due to a lack of certainty and credibility. The text's value system, I believe, tells us that Bendrix is in search for his identity, and that this identity can only be found through an opaque act of writing. It is very much in line with Davis's valid comment: 'There is a further distinction between, on the one hand, "work" as the kind of mechanical method he once employed and a body of work, the novels he lists as the work of "Bendrix the scribbler" (p.228), and, on the other, work as *struggle towards a discovery of the subject and of the self*' (Davis 1985: 403, italics mine). A perceptive remark, indeed, and, still, I am puzzled as to how Davis can unite this observation with his claim that Bendrix is 'composing a novel' (Davis 1985: 403); it just does not sound convincing. For let it be clear once and for all that Bendrix is not writing a

novel. Even Bendrix himself is confidently certain of that, reflecting '[i]f I were writing a novel I would end it here' (147).

As I have mentioned a couple of times already, Bendrix's piece of writing is more in the genre of autobiography. He is writing about real, not invented but self-experienced events which have been stored away in memory. Following the introductory quote to this section, Bendrix continues:

Now that I come to write my own story the problem is still the same, but worse – there are so many more facts, now that I have not to invent them. How can I disinter the human character from the heavy scene – the daily newspaper, the daily meal, the traffic grinding towards Battersea, the gulls coming up from the Thames looking for bread, and the early summer of 1939 glinting on the park where the children sailed their boats – one of those bright condemned pre-war summers. (25)

Not only does this passage tell us that Bendrix, in this moment of writing, is aware of telling his own story, it also describes the barriers Bendrix is confronted with when trying to move content stored in memory to content expressed in a written narrative. Again, I think, there is a stroke of brilliance in Greene's discourse in the way he exploits the words 'heavy scene', making a parallel between the pre-war summers and memory. If the pre-war summers were times of unrest, uncertainty and an almost mechanically repetitive way of life – note even how the rhythm and pace of the following discourse suggest a 'ticking bomb' where innocence ('the children') is on the verge of being lost, and human beings recede into the background because they can no longer control the powerful forces they have set in motion – memory's transition into narrative is an uncertain, unstable and far from innocent act, where human characters are not easily disinterred. This goes straight into the heart of the problem of memory and narrative, and I shall return to it shortly.

First, however, it is interesting to recognise that Bendrix contradicts himself just about ten pages later when he redefines his writing. 'There it goes again – the I, I, I, as though this were my story, and not the story of Sarah, Henry, and of course, that third, whom I hated without yet knowing him, or even believing in him' (35-36). Bendrix's

wavering as to what he is writing is ingrained in the two points I made above: on the one hand, the existential motivation for narrating; on the other, the existential opposition between human free will and divine predetermination. It is clear that the existential motivation leads Bendrix to believe he is writing his own story, expressing self-experienced events and, not least, his own self, but how futile it would be to believe that this is his story if he is just a tool without free will within the hands of the Master Novelist. As I suggested in my second chapter, Bendrix's writing can be considered a diatribe both against time and God. In other words, the ongoing battle between Bendrix and God, which manifests itself throughout the discourse, can be seen as the generator for this wavering. Be that as it may, since the relation between God and Bendrix will form a substantial part of the body of the next chapter, I shall leave it for now and consider another aspect which might lead us to concluding that Bendrix's writing belongs to the genre of autobiography.

As appears from the following extract, Bendrix intends his writing to be read by unknown readers:

How can I make *a stranger* see her as she stopped in the hall at the foot of the stairs and turned to us? I have never been able to describe even my fictitious characters except by their actions. It has always seemed to me that in a novel the reader should be allowed to imagine a character in any way he chooses: I do not want to supply him with ready-made illustrations. Now I am betrayed by my own technique, for I do not want any other woman substituted for Sarah, I want *the reader* to see the one broad forehead and bold mouth, the conformation of the skull, but all I can convey is an indeterminate figure. (18, italics mine)

It is thus likely that Bendrix the scribbler aims at publishing this account as he has done with his three preceding novels; he wants a stranger to read this. The riveting essence of this passage, however, is the emphasis it puts on the insufficient nature of language when it comes to depicting a real, self-experienced world, and it forces me to continue the discussion I started in the penultimate paragraph about the transition from memory to narrative. If all Bendrix can convey is an 'indeterminate figure,' that means that there is no such thing as a one-to-one scale between memory/reality and narrative/language – there is always a discrepancy between the two which clears the entrance for doubt to wonder

‘whether anything that I am putting down here is true’ (50). Since language thus is both so elusive and inadequate, it is apparent that there is no transparency between the Saussurian *signified* and *signifier*. Furthermore, ‘at any given time,’ as claims Ferdinand De Saussure, ‘[language] is an institution in the present and a product of the past’ (Saussure 2000: 3). I intend to ‘misuse’ the quote – hopefully for rewarding purposes – but let me first make it clear that Saussure speaks here of language as an established system in evolutionary terms. Now, what I believe the quote succinctly pinpoints is the problematic time lag that accompanies writing about something one has experienced. The temporal distance is not a negligible factor, as language exists only in the present of Bendrix’s writing, while at the same time it is generated from his past experiences. Bendrix’s inability to convey beyond an ‘indeterminate figure,’ then, is accordingly due to both the inadequacy of language and the temporal distance inherent in language itself.

In connection with my comments on the dedication of *The End of the Affair*, I claimed that Bendrix’s piece of writing could be considered some sort of confession. As Frank Kermode was the first to point out, God emerges from Bendrix’s account as not only a divine lover, but also divine novelist. ‘Bendrix’s book is plotted by God, a *testimony* to His structural powers’ (Kermode 1987: 41, italics mine). But this testimony is fortified once we understand Bendrix’s book as a kind of autobiographical account meant to be published. Towards the end of the novel Bendrix reflects on the potential consequences of the suspicious miracles that occurred in the wake of Sarah’s death:

I felt like a swimmer who has over-passed his strength and knows the tide is stronger than himself, but if I drowned, I was going to hold Henry up till the last moment. Wasn’t it, after all, the duty of a friend, for if this thing were not disproved, if it got into the papers, nobody could tell where it would end? I remembered the roses at Manchester – that fraud had taken a long time to be recognized for what it was. People are so hysterical in these days. There might be relic-hunters, prayers, processions. Henry was not unknown; the scandal would be enormous. And all the journalists asking questions about their life together and digging out that queer story of the baptism near Deauville. The vulgarity of the pious Press. I could imagine the headlines, and the headlines would produce more ‘miracles’. We had to kill this thing at the start. (189-190)

If, as I believe, Bendrix intends to get the account published, there are two potential scenarios underlying this intention. First, just like the ‘sensational’ story attached to the memento Bendrix receives from Mr Parkis – ‘the Bolton Case’ – had ‘made a great stir’ (87), so could the rumours surrounding the miracles ascribed to Sarah have resulted in great commotion, leading Bendrix to renounce these while simultaneously verifying what had actually happened. But since there is no mention of such a commotion and subsequent need for denial and verification, this reading seems less than plausible. It is more likely, as the second scenario suggests, that, like Sarah, Bendrix has come to ‘believe the whole bag of tricks’ and has ‘fallen into belief’ like he once ‘fell in love’ (146-147). By writing and publishing the book Bendrix risks that it gets ‘into the papers,’ ‘relic-hunters, prayers, processions,’ even that the Catholic Church will make a saint out of Sarah, and the only acceptable reason for that is that he now believes in God and the miracles himself. Let it be said, however, that I do not believe Bendrix’s motivation for writing is a wish to secure a position for Sarah as a saint – Bendrix does not write her hagiography, that is – even though that might be an implication of it. It seems to me that his motivation is founded upon a much more complex ground than that.

Again, accepting that Bendrix proposes to publish ‘The End of the Affair’, enables us to interpret *The End of the Affair* as an unconventional, but nevertheless sincere, kind of confession. There is a meticulous linkage here to some of the aspects of Bendrix as a narrator, on which I commented above. In particular, I am thinking about the fact that Bendrix is very much focused on his darker human sides and that he tries to come across as reliable. It is thus curiously plausible to understand Bendrix, when he tells us of his intrusion into Sarah and Henry’s marriage, how his jealousy and hatred led him to hire Mr Parkis to detect Sarah’s new lover and how he prevented Sarah getting a proper funeral – the list of immoral actions is almost inexhaustible – as a man who indirectly confesses his

sins in a written form. In the light of this, Bendrix's writing and publishing this account seems motivated by a desire for atonement. Of course, that is not to say that Bendrix is at peace with God – God is actually the only one with whom Bendrix is left to battle – nor do I suggest that this desire to atone is the only element that motivates him. As I aimed to show in the previous chapter, Bendrix tries to cumulate understanding of what happened by reflecting through memory and writing. Additionally, and more importantly, Bendrix is motivated by putting up an existential fight against God. His pen, out of which his 'bitterness leaks' (12), becomes his only sharp weapon against God if there is the slightest possibility of him being wrong when he towards the end of his story suspects that

we have to be pushed around. We have the obstinacy of non-existence. We are inextricably bound to the plot, and wearily God forces us, here and there, according to his intention, characters without poetry, without free will, whose only importance is that somewhere, at some time, we help to furnish the scene in which a living character moves and speaks, providing perhaps the saints with the opportunities for *their* free will. (186, original emphasis)

That Bendrix is at the same time motivated by a desire for atonement and a desire to fight God may at first sight seem to run contrary to one another. There is an obvious analogy here to Bendrix's relationship with Sarah, which is motivated by an apparent contradiction between love and hate. It is one of Greene's typical paradoxes, I believe, accentuating that much truth can be found within such contradictions. For would it not, after all, have been untrustworthy – not to say utopian – if Bendrix's relation to God was only one-dimensionally motivated? Intriguing as it is, the Biblical story of Jacob wrestling with the Lord jumps easily to mind. After having fought the whole night, the Lord says: 'Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed' (The Bible 1997: 40). To fight the Lord in order to obtain His blessing, then, is indeed paradoxical, but nevertheless not unbelievable, and the story,

succinctly points to the two-fold nature of Bendrix's motivation: the wish to confess and atone and the need to battle with God. For as we now shall see, the battle with God is the only thing left in Bendrix; the rest has come to an *end*.

First, there is a strong indication that Bendrix has come to an end of love. Needless to say, Bendrix lost the great love of his life, melodramatically speaking, when Sarah died of pneumonia in 1946, even though the first clear-cut step towards the end of their love accompanied Sarah's decision to leave Bendrix in 1944. Bendrix is even confident 'the end had started long before: the fewer telephone calls for this or that inadequate reason, the quarrels I began with her because I had realized the danger of love ending' (145).

Furthermore, there is a sense that when Sarah now is dead, Bendrix is robbed of sexual desire, that his 'passion for Sarah had killed simple lust for ever. Never again would I be able to enjoy a woman without love' (58). He has 'given all the sex' he has away (141), doubting whether he can fall in love again, and when he brings with him a prostitute when Henry is away on a conference, he finds himself impotent and saddened at 'abandoning for ever something [he] had enjoyed so much' (171).

The second element, which, besides his love for Sarah, once comprised the great passion of his life, has also come to an end, namely his passion for writing:

For I have come to an end of my interest in work now: no one can please me much with praise or hurt me with blame. When I began that novel with the civil servant I was still interested, but when Sarah left me, I recognized my work for what it was – as unimportant a drug as cigarettes to get one through the weeks and years. If we are extinguished by death, as I still try to believe, what point is there in leaving some books behind any more than bottles, clothes or cheap jewellery? and if Sarah is right, how unimportant all the importance of art is. (148)

The reviewers may after all be correct in asserting that a 'craftsman...was all that was left [him] of what had been a passion' (35). Besides the fact that both his love and passion for art have come to an end, there is a general feeling throughout *The End of the Affair* that everything in the writing protagonist's life is coming to an end. The purposeful life has somehow gone astray: 'I turned back not knowing where to go. That is the worst of time

nowadays – there is so much of it’ (66). Losing a direction in life leads Bendrix to a loss of individuality (138), and it all becomes like dying ‘a little more every day’ (139). It is also possible, I believe, to interpret Bendrix as a character apprehensively longing for death, ‘the shattering annihilation that would prevent for ever the getting up [and] the putting on of clothes’ (70). Even on the first page of his account he expresses artistically this longing as he ponders on the word comfort: ‘To me comfort is like the wrong memory at the wrong place or time’ (7). The absolute absence of logicity in this simile, implying some sort of non-existence, suggests that Bendrix believes it is only possible to be at ease and find comfort in death.

Furthermore, we need to remind ourselves that after that fatal night in June 1944 and the subsequent break-up of their relationship, Bendrix quite seriously considers suicide. ‘Then the date came and the play went on and on and I didn’t kill myself,’ and then follows his reason for not acting according to his intention; a reason which most intriguingly points straight to the core of my approach: ‘It wasn’t cowardice: it was a *memory* that stopped me – the *memory* of the look of disappointment on Sarah’s face when I came into the room after the V1 had fallen. Hadn’t she, at the heart, hoped for my death, so that her new affair with X would hurt her conscience less, for she had a kind of elementary conscience?’ (75, italics mine). As it was a memory that motivated him to go on living then, memory is the force which now compels Bendrix to let the ink leak out of his pen one final time, all leading up to ‘The End of the Affair,’ and just like the mysterious Mr X was part of that memory, so, as we shall see in the next chapter, is God to be found in memory when Bendrix is writing his story. Memory becomes thus a kind of existential motivator and the only driving force left in Bendrix’s life. It is therefore not unlikely that the completion of ‘The End of the Affair’ will be Bendrix’s last act. I do not

intend to pursue that possibility, however, and shall leave it hanging elliptically in the air as I now go on to elaborate on aspects of memory and narrative.

Memory and Narrative

I mentioned in my second chapter that Greene became a novelist because of ‘a desire to reduce a chaos of experience to some sort of order.’ In *Ways of Escape* (1980) he expresses a typically modernist view, claiming that ‘[w]riting is a form of therapy; sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation’ (285).

Commenting on this quote while drawing on Alan Wilde’s *Horizons of Assent*:

Modernism, Postmodernism and the Ironic Imagination, Salvatore highlights that to ‘find refuge in the order and symmetry of art...is to create an apparently unresolvable, ironic contradiction between the unified formal properties of a novel and its philosophical standpoint’ (Salvatore 1988: 5). Samuel Beckett came to express some of the same concerns, although more on the general level of contemporary art. According to Tom

Driver, in his account of a conversation with Beckett in Paris, the novelist and playwright

began to speak about the tension in art between the mess and form. Until recently, art has withstood the pressure of chaotic things. It has held them at bay. It realized that to admit them was to jeopardize form. ‘How could the mess be admitted, because it appears to be the very opposite of form and therefore destructive of the very thing art holds itself to be?’ But now we can keep it out no longer, because we have come into a time when ‘it invades our experience at every moment. It is there and it must be allowed in ... What I am saying does not mean that there will henceforth be no form in art. It only means that there will be new form, and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now.’ (quoted in Olney 1998: 11-12)

Needless to say, the typical form of the Greenian narrative – David Lodge labels Greene’s fiction as ‘neorealist post-modern fiction’ (Lodge 1990: 41) – is distinctively dissimilar to

the rather obscure and idiosyncratic form of the Beckettian one. Although *The End of the Affair*, as mentioned earlier, is relatively experimental when considering Greene's production in isolation, it is still clear that its form does not, as Beckett makes a call for, 'accommodate the mess.' However fascinating this discussion is, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go further into it. As for my purposes, I find that the problem of form and content, order and chaos, and experience and art, which confronts the historical artist as a well-nigh impassable mountain, has crucial parallels to the position Bendrix struggles with as a narrator and writer of his own story.

For although there is an ordered form in Bendrix's narrative, there is also a sense that the mess he projects into the ordered narrative simultaneously lies as a disturbing and troubling shell around this order. In his profound study *Memory and Narrative*, which investigates the evolving literary form of autobiography from St. Augustine, through Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and up to Samuel Beckett, James Olney relates the mess to the human faculty of memory: 'the primary agent in the making of the mess – and perhaps in its unmaking too – is nothing other than human memory... a faculty that for better and worse is much more than a faculty, too often out of our own (or any) control' (Olney 1998: 16). This is very much in accordance with what I see as one of Bendrix's major problems, namely memory itself. For if Bendrix's conception of existence stands before him as chaotic, it is because memory – which is 'the present of things past,' according to St Augustine – is a simultaneous expression of, and the total accumulation of, every past incident in his life. What memory, if it is so positioned that it is 'out of our control,' chooses to highlight and bind together in order to delineate a 'plot' (see definition on p. 42) does not necessarily constitute the truth. Again, Bendrix himself even suspects that '[i]f this book of mine fails to take a straight course, it is because I am lost in a strange region: I have no map. I sometimes wonder whether anything I am putting down here is true' (50).

But as we have seen, the problem becomes even more pressing when memory is subsequently transferred to a narrative form, where language itself does not provide more than an ‘indeterminate figure.’ The analogy between my interpretation of the Saussurian quote and St Augustine’s definition of memory is obvious: both are faculties of the present while they at the same time are products of the past. Neither memory nor narrative can fully and correctly provide Bendrix with a picture of what really happened – at best he can hope for something bordering on the truth – and the ultimate cause for this is most likely time itself. Thus, the main reason why Bendrix embarks on a quest to control time, as mentioned in the previous chapter, might be found firmly rooted in the fact that it is the temporal dimension which blurs, and so reduces the utility of, memory and narrative. What is left of existence is only chaos.

Greene, however, ingenuously plays on what I have called reflective space in order to enhance in the novel this sense of chaos. First, there is a sense, typically in line with the modernist feeling of alienation, in which Bendrix – and we might as well add Greene – conceive of existence as being more complicated and chaotic than it was for the previous generations. When Bendrix goes through Sarah’s childhood books, he picks up one which had been one of his own favourites, Scott’s *Last Expedition*. ‘It seemed curiously dated now, this heroism with only the ice for enemy, self-sacrifice that involved no deaths beyond one’s own. *Two wars stood between us and them*’ (173, italics mine). The same sense of being lost is conveyed when he looks at the photograph of Henry’s father: ‘I thought how like the photograph was to Henry...and how unlike. It wasn’t the moustache that made it different – it was the *Victorian look of confidence, of being at home in the world and knowing the way around*, and suddenly I felt again that friendly sense of companionship. I liked him better than I would have liked his father...We were fellow strangers’ (14, italics mine). Both passages are ripe with a sense of disillusion and

alienation, and there is a distinct feeling, I believe, particularly in the first passage, that the intrusion of the two wars is seen as the generator for this feeling of being lost in the world. Much of the action in *The End of the Affair* takes place during the Second World War, and specifically during the Blitz. Without making the connection too explicit, Greene manages in a subtle way to parallel the chaos of war with Bendrix's conception of existence as chaotic. An illustrative example is when Mr Smythe tries to convince Bendrix of giving Sarah a Catholic funeral:

[Smythe] was turning the screw of absurdity too far. I wished to shatter the deadness of this buried room with laughter. I sat down on the sofa and began to shake with it. I thought of Sarah dead upstairs and Henry asleep with a silly smile on his face, and the lover with the spots discussing the funeral with the lover who had employed Mr Parkis to sprinkle his door-bell with powder. The tears ran down my cheeks as I laughed. Once in the blitz I saw a man laughing outside his house where his wife and child were buried.' (143)

Chaos and absurdity pervade the war, they pervade existence, and finally, even though the result, to some extent, is an ordered narrative form, they pervade the mutual acts of remembering and narrating when Bendrix writes down his account in 1949.

In the course of this chapter we have seen how the various elements comprising the beginning of *The End of the Affair* draw our attention to memory and narrative as two powerful complexes. We have seen how its own narrative opening problematizes the need for such a starting point and how the problem of a narrative beginning is an extension of one of memory's own characteristic problems; namely that memory is a simultaneous, present existence of things past. To make sense of memory one needs to somewhat arbitrarily pick an episode as a point of departure and then connect other episodes to that by binding them to the temporal dimension. In addition, by investigating complex concepts like genre and motivation I have shown how memory compels Bendrix not only to confess, atone and cumulate understanding, but also to pick up his pen as a sword against God in an existential fight for free will. For as we shall see in the following chapter, it is God who stands at the *end* of memory.

Chapter 4: Memory, Temporality and God

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus; in your mind.
 But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know

– T.S Eliot, ‘Burnt Norton’ –

Bakhtinian Chronotope and Memory

Over the last decades the theories of the Russian Mikhail Bakhtin, often referred to as *dialogism*, have received a great deal of scholarly attention. As a literary critic and theorist Bakhtin has been welcomed by many as a liberator from the tight conventions of the schools of Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction which had dominated literary theory since the 1960s. David Lodge, for one, suggests in his collection of essays, *After Bakhtin*, that the discovery and dissemination of Bakhtin’s writings have opened up

new possibilities for the discussion of literary texts. Among the numerous attractive terms in Bakhtin's thinking, I find his ideas of the chronotope in the novel particularly intriguing.

In his essay 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel' Bakhtin defines this term as

the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature...In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (Bakhtin 1981: 84)

Bakhtin recognises several different types of chronotopes, of which I believe especially two are rewardingly illuminating as regards my discussion of *The End of the Affair*: the chronotope of the *road* and the chronotope of *threshold*. In the first, time 'fuses together with space and flows in it (forming the road); this is the source of the rich metaphorical expansion of the road as a course: "the course of a life," "to set out on a new course," "the course of history" and so on; varied and multi-leveled are the ways in which road is turned into a metaphor, but its fundamental pivot is the flow of time' (Bakhtin 1981: 244). The second chronotope, which Bakhtin sees as particularly charged with emotion and value, has its most fundamental instance as 'the chronotope of *crisis* and *break* in a life' (Bakhtin 1981: 248, original emphasis). It is connected with 'the breaking point of a life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold)' (Bakhtin 1981: 248). Furthermore, in literature, this chronotope is more often than not implicitly metaphorical and symbolic (Bakhtin 1981: 248). The significance of the chronotopes in Bakhtin's theory is their meaning for narrative as *organising centres* for the narrative events of the novel. 'The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative' (Bakhtin 1981: 250).

In *The End of the Affair* the chronotope of the road is epitomised by memory. We need to remind ourselves that the fictional universe Greene invites us to take part of, is the ‘unmapped’ roads of the writing protagonist’s memory. First and foremost, he invites us into what narratology terms the frame of narrative, or frame story, which, in our case, is Bendrix memorising and writing his account in 1949. For some strange reason many misleadingly regard the frame narrative as just a pretext for the larger and more significant narrative(s) embedded within it. I am thoroughly convinced such an understanding implies nothing but a significant loss of interpretative possibilities. Much of the critical attention on, for instance, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, in which Marlow’s story is contained in a frame, told as it is to a fellow sailor while waiting in the Thames estuary for the tide to turn, has been focused on the frame and how it enriches interpretation of the embedded story. Having learnt from his great ‘teacher,’ Greene exploits the frame narrative in much the same interpretatively fecund way.

The embedded story of the novel under investigation here consists roughly of significant past events which comprise a major part of Bendrix’s lived life. As such, they present themselves to Bendrix in the psychic space of memory as ‘encounters’ on the road. These encounters with past events, or ‘moments of experience’ as Bendrix calls them, become narrative reflections of the historical physical space and time, in which the past events once took place. The flow of time in the embedded narrative is the flow of time in and between these encounters. Obviously, those are constructions the reader must make and bear in mind when reading the embedded story. A typical aspect of these encounters is that, to an extensive degree, they are charged with value and sentiment. For instance, returning from the lavatory, Bendrix repeats to Henry the two lines he had seen (‘Damn you, landlord, and your breasty wife,’ and ‘To all pimps and whores a merry syphilis and a happy gonorrhea.’):

I wanted to shock him, and it surprised me when he said simply, 'Jealousy's an awful thing.' 'You mean the bit about the breasty wife?' 'Both of them. When you are miserable, you envy other people's happiness.' It wasn't what I had ever expected him to learn in the Ministry of Home Security. And there – in the phrase – *the bitterness leaks again out of my pen*. What a dull lifeless quality this bitterness is. If I could I would write with love, but if I could write with love, I would be another man: I would never have lost love. (11-12, italics mine)

There is a sense, I believe, in which 'again' accentuates that the feelings which once accompanied an experience are still there, one way or another, when encountering the same instance through memory. In other words, the passage does not only convey that Bendrix is saturated with bitterness when writing; it also suggests that the psychic reflection of physis in memory epitomises past sentiments. But an even more typical trait of these reflections is that the past sentiments have been modified, complemented and sometimes even replaced by more recent ones. When Bendrix writes about the start of his relationship with Sarah, which presumably must have been enjoyable times for him, he says: 'What a summer it was. I am not going to try and name the month exactly – I should have to *go back to it through so much pain*,' and 'I would have liked to have left that past time alone, for as I write of 1939 I feel all *my hatred returning*' (26, 27, italics mine). As readers we experience Bendrix's 'moments of experience' as revisions and not as transparent visions of the past. It is fair to claim that this is one of the strengths of *The End of the Affair* as an artistic work purporting to portray the realistic quality of memory and existence. That Greene makes use of modernist paraphernalia, as I displayed in my second chapter, does not oppose such a purpose. Part of the modernist cry to 'make it new' was to establish new aesthetic principles which could pave the way for art to become more accurate and genuine in depicting existence – realism had proven insufficient to that task. Be that as it may, I can only agree with Sarah, as she puts it in her diary, that 'you can hear the nerves twitch through [Bendrix's] sentences' (119).

If the chronotope of the road is the organising centre for the overall structure of the novel, the chronotope of threshold is the organising centre for the embedded narrative.

This has already been indicated when I commented on the epigraph of the novel in my previous chapter, suggesting that the psychic transition would be one from disbelief to belief. As one commentator suggests, ‘the novel may be seen as the dynamic interplay of narrative strategies by which Bendrix moves gradually from belief in the finite boundaries of reality to an increasing scepticism of them that brings him finally to the threshold of a new ontological orientation’ (Walker 1984: 223). Walker is unquestionably right as regards the latter part of this quote, but he misses the mark slightly when he claims that this movement occurs by the dynamic interplay of narrative strategies. He seems to have forgotten that Bendrix at the beginning of his account admits that he as of 1949 is a believer. The movement he so perceptively puts his finger on happens in the embedded story, not in the frame. It is thus intriguing to investigate how and where this transition takes place, and I believe a potentially rewarding point of departure is to look at how memory works on the diegetic level of the narrative. According to Augustine, ‘[m]emory is altogether specific to the individual, but beyond its particularity and uniqueness it also affords a bridge between time and eternity and is the nonlocatable locus where the individual may discover God’ (Olney 1998: 17). In the remainder of this chapter I shall try to show how Bendrix’s movement towards a discovery of, and a belief in, God is curiously analogous to Augustine’s claim that God can be found in memory. Whenever I find it suitable, I shall also comment on memory, temporality and God as problematic aspects extending into the frame narrative. Finally, I shall focus the discussion on the proposition I briefly mentioned in the second chapter about movement and stasis.

Memory and God

After Bendrix has met with Sarah in ‘the church at the corner of Park Road’ (128) for what turns out to be their final meeting, and where he has confidently reassured himself that he

finally knows ‘the end of the story’ (128), Bendrix reverts to his daily routine, writing the ‘minimum of seven hundred and fifty words’ (132) a day. While awaiting news from Sarah Bendrix makes notes for the life of General Gordon, reflecting: ‘Why had I been invited to write this biography? I often wondered. They would have done better to have chosen an author who believed in Gordon’s God. I could appreciate the obstinate stand at Khartoum – the hatred of the safe politicians at home, but *the Bible on the desk belonged to another world of thought from mine*’ (132, italics mine). Having already read two thirds of his account, we really wonder if the Bible actually belongs to such an alien world as Bendrix claims. The text, so far, has in fact been saturated with Biblical allusions and the ongoing battle with the transcendental. In the main, these appear in the extradiegetic passages, but there are also traces of them in the diegetic ones, as, for instance, when Bendrix and Mr Parkis’s son pay the atheist Mr Smythe a visit. Bendrix reacts when Mr Smythe wants to talk to the boy, whom the schoolmasters and the priests have ‘only just begun to corrupt...with their lies’ (82), according to the rationalist:

‘What did you want to ask him?’

‘I wanted him to feel at home here because then he might return. There are so many things one wants to tell a child. How the world came into existence. I wanted to tell him about death. I wanted to rid him of all the lies they inject at school.’

‘Rather a lot to do in half an hour.’

‘One can *sow a seed*.’

I said maliciously, ‘*That comes out of the Gospels*.’

‘Oh, I’ve been corrupted too. You don’t need to tell me that.’

‘Do people really come to you – on the quiet?’

‘You’d be surprised,’ Miss Smythe said. ‘People are longing for a *message of hope*.’

‘Hope?’

Yes, hope,’ Smythe said. ‘Can’t you see what hope there’d be, if everybody in the world knew that there was nothing else but what we have here? No future compensation, rewards, punishments.’ His face had a crazy nobility when one cheek was hidden. ‘Then we’d begin to make this world like heaven.’

‘There’s a terrible lot to be explained first,’ I said.

‘Can I show you my library?’

‘It’s the beat rationalist library in South London,’ Miss Smythe explained.

‘I don’t need to be converted, Mr Smythe. I believe in nothing as it is. Except now and then.’

‘It’s the now and thens we have to deal with.’

‘*The odd thing is that those are the moments of hope*.’ (83, italics mine)

There are basically two points I would like to make from this extract. First, Bendrix discloses the fact that he from time to time – in the ‘now and thens’ – has found moments of refuge and hope in belief. It seems like he has not managed to keep what he and Sarah had so happily agreed upon: ‘to eliminate God from [their] world’ (69). Secondly, we can infer that Bendrix must have had significant knowledge of the Bible, for not only does he recognise Smythe’s phrase as taken from the Bible, but he immediately knows the exact place it is taken from – the Gospels. Of course, such knowledge may be due to nothing else than the cultural heritage of the society in which Bendrix finds himself. Unquestionably, part of tradition are Biblical stories and the various interpretations which are generated from them: ‘If we had not been taught how to interpret the story of the Passion,’ wonders Bendrix at one instance, ‘would we have been able to say from their actions alone whether it was the jealous Judas or the cowardly Peter who loved Christ?’ (27). Besides emphasising that the Bible – God’s supreme and perfect ‘novel’ – is present in the mind of Bendrix at such an early stage of the novel, Greene also exploits this traditional interpretation to parallel Bendrix and Judas, possibly suggesting, it seems to me, Bendrix’s rather unconventional love for Christ. What is important, however, is that before Bendrix even starts conversing and arguing with God, God has been present in Bendrix’s memory either as little seeds of belief or through the recognition of His Word.

When we move up to the next narrative level, the extradiegetic, Biblical allusions become more prevalent. As for now, I shall only look at one particular instance in which I believe the allusion stands out as notably powerful and effective. Once again we shall turn our attention to the interpretatively suggestive opening of the novel. What Bendrix actually does when he starts his account by stating that ‘[a] story has no beginning or end,’ comprises nothing less than an act of defiance against God and His Word. As readers, we are *in medias res* thrown into the battle Bendrix fights with his opponent. Presumably, this

may not come to mind on a first reading, but rereading reveals, I believe, that Bendrix's opening defies the two openings of the Bible – the openings of the Old and the New Testament. The opening of the Book of Genesis, which I quoted in the previous chapter, is summarised and angled somewhat differently in the opening of the Gospel of St John: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made' (The Bible: 114). The intriguing aspect of this is that both Bendrix and God are thoroughly dependent on language in order to express themselves, or rather, express their own beings or selves. God is contingent on the Word in order to convey his own self ('And God *said*,' we recall from the Book of Genesis), whereas Bendrix's self is sustained by the word. But God and Bendrix diverge markedly from one another in that God is able to define a beginning of His story, while Bendrix, because of his inability to comprehend the whole of his being, finds it completely impossible even to delineate a beginning, as well as an end, of his, which is just another way of saying that he cannot define a beginning and end of his own self.

Furthermore, into this first sentence of the novel is also incorporated the juxtaposition of God and Bendrix as Creator and creator, Artist and artist and Plotter and plotter, which I briefly mentioned in the previous chapter. God is the supreme Artist who creates the World and makes man in His image by uttering the Word, and He rules as the unsurpassed Plotter of history. By comparison, Bendrix is only the praised artist and novelist who can create fictional worlds with fictional characters, and when he writes his own story down he realises that he has not been the 'plotter' – at least not the one he believed he was – of his own life and that all he now can convey is 'an indeterminate figure' (18). All this is germinal in, and I am tempted to claim generated by, the way Sarah juxtaposes her old lover with her new in the way she addresses them. Coming home from

her walk on that 'black wet January night' when Henry has unburdened his troubled mind to Bendrix, Sarah, surprised to find Bendrix there, exclaims: "'You?'" She had always called me "you." "Is that you?" on the telephone, "Can you? Will you? Do you?" so that I imagined, like a fool, for a few minutes at a time, there was only one "you" in the world and that was me' (18). However, when Bendrix starts reading Sarah's diary, which he curiously enough does by reading the end of it first, he is at once confronted with the superior 'lover' who has replaced him: '...anything left, when we'd finished, but You....so that one day we might have nothing left except this love of You. But You are too good to me. When I ask You for pain, You give me peace' (89). The 'you' with capital initial stares Bendrix mockingly in the face and becomes a reminder of his own inferiority.

One of the pivotal scenes in terms of 'the way towards the threshold' in the embedded narrative is the scene where Bendrix, after having pursued Sarah for a long while, finally finds her in the Catholic church:

I sat down behind her like Mr Parkis and waited. I could have waited years now that I knew the end of the story. I was cold and wet and very happy. I could even look with charity towards the altar and the figure dangling there. She loves us both, I thought, but if there is to be a conflict between an image and a man, I know who will win. I could put my hand on her thigh or my mouth on her breast: he was imprisoned behind the altar and couldn't move to plead *his* cause...looking up at the altar I thought with triumph, almost as though he were a living rival, You see – these are the arguments that win, and gently moved my fingers across her breast. (128, 130, original emphasis)

Being on his opponent's territory, on God's home ground, Bendrix sets up, for the first time in the story, this conflict between image and man. Again, I am inclined to suggest that Greene intentionally and successfully draws on the Creation account, making Bendrix reverse the original analogy between God and his image. While accentuating his own originality, Bendrix, at this stage, confidently takes delight in the conviction that God is only a product generated by human imagination, a confined image left unable 'to plead his cause.' He possesses the persuasive arguments which will prevail – a 'hand on her thigh' and fingers and mouth on her breast. Nevertheless, there is a sense here that Bendrix

indirectly betrays his own conviction, for is it not, when one comes to think of it, a recognition of God to address the imprisoned image as ‘You’ with a capital letter? Furthermore, when Sarah again is taken with a fit of coughing, which seems ‘*too big...* for her small body’ (31, italics mine), Bendrix’s belief in his persuasive arguments seems shaken: ‘I came and sat beside her and put my hand on her knee while she coughed. I thought, If only one had *a touch that could heal*’ (128, italics mine). As we know from the following discourse, that property is only possessed by the image.

It is also possible to argue that, although he is not actually a character in the strictest sense of the term, God is the Artist in the novel who expresses himself artistically in metonymical ways. He presents himself metonymically to Bendrix – and also to us as readers – through Biblical allusions, as the image above, as the silent ‘You’ of Sarah’s and Bendrix’s ‘interior dialogues,’ and, not least, through Bendrix’s memories, as we shall see below. Bendrix, on the other hand, imposes himself as artist upon the reader through particularly two notable techniques. First, his account is permeated with generalisations such as ‘[w]e are not hurt only by tragedy: the grotesque too carries weapons, undignified, ridiculous weapons’ (52) and ‘[d]isbelief could be a product of hysteria just as much as belief’ (144). Second, the pervasive use of the simile underscores Bendrix’s intrusive artistry. These may serve as illustrative examples: ‘I had fallen out of their sight as completely as a stone in a pond’ (9), ‘Henry was important, but important rather as an elephant is important, from the size of his department (10) and ‘[h]e was like the first enemy soldier a man encounters on a battlefield, dead and indistinguishable, not a White or a Red, but just a human being like himself’ (183).

Having established God as an Artist in Bendrix’s account, let us now look at how Bendrix comes to realise God. This, I will argue, is a continuation of the proposition I brought up in the second chapter, where I suggested that space becomes metonymical of

different temporalities. I would like to start this part of the discussion by paying attention to the incident where Bendrix comes round after the V1 explosion:

My mind for a few moments was clear of everything except a sense of tiredness as though I had been on a long journey. I had no memory at all of Sarah and I was completely free from anxiety, jealousy, insecurity, hate: my mind was *a blank sheet on which somebody had just been on the point of writing a message of happiness*. I felt sure that when my memory came, the writing would continue and that I should be happy. (71, italics mine)

One of the intriguing aspects of this passage is how it seems to suggest that the happiness Bendrix enjoys after the explosion is a result of his loss of memory. In a state of oblivion, where existence is comprised of the pure present only, and where the self is never defined or does not exist because ‘the present of things past’ is nothing but an utter impossibility, Bendrix, curiously enough, finds a kind of happiness. It is, nevertheless, illustrative that the melancholic protagonist should find happiness in obliteration and death; after all, that sense is being conveyed throughout the narrative. Perhaps another passage, where Bendrix expresses part of his metaphysics, may serve well as a commentary on the extract above: ‘The sense of unhappiness is so much easier to convey than that of happiness. In misery we seem aware of our own existence, even though it may be in the form of a monstrous egotism: this pain of mine is individual, this nerve that winces belongs to me and to no other. *But happiness annihilates us: we lose our identity*’ (47, italics mine). However destructive it may sound, the inter-illumination of these two passages reveals that Bendrix is convinced happiness comes at the expense of identity and memory. Since his identity is defined by a memory which is only pregnant with misery and unhappiness, oblivion becomes the only possible sanctuary. But, as we saw in the previous chapter, obliteration is postponed because of Bendrix’s need to identify the mysterious Mr X, an act which comprises nothing less than to solve the ‘equation,’ figuratively speaking. Arguably, this reverberates Bendrix’s saying, at the beginning of his account, ‘I find it hard to conceive of any God who is not as simple as a perfect *equation*’ (11, italics mine).

There is one further point I would like to make from the extract above: Bendrix seems to equate his memory of Sarah with his memory in general. In a succinct way the passage displays how Sarah constitutes the centre of, and even saturates the whole of, Bendrix's memory. His memory is penetrated by Sarah both on the level of the embedded narrative and on the level of the frame, and thinking in terms of the spatial arrangements of the novel, it is typical that Sarah's diary is placed significantly in the physical centre of Bendrix's narrative. However, it is God who comprises the centre of both Bendrix's memory of Sarah and of the diary itself. Thus, I believe it is fair to claim that God, through Sarah, penetrates both the protagonist's memory as well as his narrative, and I shall now move on to explore this in further detail.

In the wake of Sarah's death there are several instances where space predominantly invokes different temporalities. In everyday life it is very often taken for granted that space has such a function, and it might even seem a too obvious point to make, but it is nevertheless a fact that, because of memory, we connect different times of our lives to particular spatial dimensions. A familiar space does not only indicate the actual 'here and now,' it also invokes every significant past encounter with that space, and as such it presents itself to us as a fusion of temporalities. The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, whose *The Poetics of Space* is a significant contribution to understanding human conception of space, argues that in 'its countless alveoli space contains compressed time. That is what space is for' (Bachelard 1994: 8). Perhaps I put too much emphasis on this proposition, but since I believe Greene exploits it for particular structural and thematic purposes, let us first look at the episode where Henry asks Bendrix to stay at his place for the night. Bendrix accepts, and while Henry goes away to fetch some sheets and blankets Bendrix scrutinises the room around him:

I looked at the *parquet floor*, and I remembered the *exact timbre of her cry*. On the desk where she wrote her letters was a clutter of objects, and *every object I could interpret like a*

code. I thought, She hasn't even thrown away that pebble. We laughed at its shape and there it still is, like a paper-weight. What would Henry make of it, and the miniature bottle of a liqueur none of us cared for, and the piece of glass polished by the sea, and the small wooden rabbit I had found in Nottingham? Should I take all these objects away with me? They would go into the waste-paper basket otherwise, when Henry at last got around to clearing up, but *could I bear their company?* (139, italics mine)

To interpret every object like a code suggests a distinct recognition of the object's history or of the fused temporalities inherent in that object. For instance, when he views the parquet floor, he, and we as readers, recall how he 'crouched on the floor beside her and watched and watched, as though I might never see this again – the brown indeterminate-coloured hair like a pool of liquor on the parquet, the sweat on her forehead, the heavy breathing as though she had run a race and now like a young athlete lay in the exhaustion of victory' (49). The moment when he had put his 'hand gently over her mouth to deaden that strange sad angry cry of *abandonment*' (49, italics mine) is still present in the parquet floor. But the reason why Bendrix wonders whether he can bear 'the company' of these objects is that God has intruded upon the memories attached to them. Having read the note from Sarah's waste-paper basket and, not least, her diary, Bendrix remembers how Sarah had addressed God: 'I know I am only beginning to love, but already I want to *abandon* everything but you' (53, italics mine). He even recognises the possibly diminished role he had played in that event which unfolded on the parquet floor: 'Did I ever love Maurice as much before I loved You?' speculates Sarah, '[o]r was it really You I loved all the time? Did I touch You when I touched him?' (123). All this is arguably part of the code Bendrix interprets when looking at the floor.

Days later, Bendrix even moves in with Henry and begins to see what Henry had meant 'by the house never being empty' (171): 'I don't know how to express it. Because she's always away, she's never away. You see, she's never anywhere else. She's not having lunch with anybody, she's not at a cinema with you. There's nowhere for her to be but at home' (169). The house is metonymically filled with Sarah; the cupboards full of

clothes, compacts, scents and the stair that ‘always squeaked’ (136, 46), and everything comes together to comprise the impression that Sarah ‘stood at the end of every path’ (137), (and beside her stands God). Even space which never was part of the life of Sarah becomes a reminder of her: ‘Sarah and I never drank Chianti and now the act of drinking it reminded me of *that* fact. I might as well have had our favourite claret, I couldn’t have thought of her more. Even vacancy was crowded with her’ (161, original emphasis). Thinking in terms of ‘vacancy,’ it is intriguing to notice that the three-year silence between the historical occurrence of the events and the act of putting them down to paper must have been ‘crowded’ with memories of Sarah. ‘There wasn’t any point in trying to avoid her even for a moment. I thought, why did You have to do this to us? If she hadn’t believed in You she would be alive now, we should have been lovers still’ (137). Even the numerous encounters with Mr Parkis, after their business has been concluded, and the meetings with the atheist Mr Smythe, point towards Sarah and subsequently towards God. And when talking about Mr Parkis and Mr Smythe after Sarah’s death, we move into the critical minefield of the novel.

For it is in the miracles which occur in the story that God (and His accomplice, Sarah) displays his metonymical artistry in the most powerful and effective way. The miracles attributed to Sarah comprise the aspect of the novel which has received most critical attention over the years. According to Cedric Watts, when comparing Greene’s novels, *The End of the Affair* stands out in that God’s intervention is so direct and manifest in the arrangements of events that ‘[e]ven a believer might flinch at the extent to which the outcome appears to depend on supernatural intervention...If the evidence had been more ambiguous, it might have been more plausible’ (Watts 1996: 61-62). The list of supernatural incidents appears long; Bendrix’s life saved by Sarah’s wager with God, Mr Smythe’s spots healed by his sleeping on a scrap of Sarah’s hair, Bendrix rescued from

fornication with Sylvia Black and Mr Parkis's twelve-year-old boy healed by reading a note in one of Sarah's childhood books. Even Greene himself came to regret that he had made the miracles so explicit in the novel. In the introduction to the 1974 Collected Edition text, he says: 'I realised too late how I had been cheating – cheating myself, cheating the reader.....The incident of the strawberry mark [the strawberry mark was replaced by urticaria in this edition] should have had no place in the book; every so-called miracle, like the curing of Parkis's boy, ought to have had a completely natural explanation' (quoted in Watts 1996: 62). Even though the miracles appear less than plausible from both a rational and a less rational point of view, I am bold enough to disagree with Greene on that point. Obviously, many of the points I made in the previous chapter would have been unconvincing and superfluous if the so-called miracles had had perfectly natural explanations, but even more importantly, Bendrix would not then have fought God so fiercely by writing 'The End of the Affair.' Figuratively speaking, every word of Bendrix's discourse demands that something supernatural has taken place, whether we believe it possible or not. Without this direct and manifest intervention from God, Bendrix would not have conceived of his opponent as a real and active character in his life, and consequently there would not have been a story to write. Removing God's direct intervention in the story would arguably have implied removing the structural and thematic centres of the novel – *The End of the Affair* would become a totally different novel or not a novel at all. However, since it is beyond the scope of my thesis to investigate this any further, I shall return to the exploration of Bendrix's way towards God.

There is particularly one visual metaphor which frequently appears in the text and therefore demands specific attention: that of the disease or the cure. At the cremation of Sarah's body, which is a result of Bendrix's denying her a Catholic funeral in a challenge to God to '[r]esurrect that body if you can' (137), Bendrix meets with Sarah's mother, Mrs

Bertram, who tells him that Sarah was baptised at the age of two. ‘Suddenly, inexplicably, I felt fear, like a man who has committed the all-but-perfect crime and watches the first unexpected crack in the wall of his deception. How deep does the crack go? Can it be plugged in time?’ wonders Bendrix (162). And then it is that Mrs Bertram discloses that she ‘always had a wish that it would “take”. Like vaccination’ (164). It is repeated again when Henry days later confesses to Bendrix: ‘It’s an extraordinary coincidence, isn’t it? Baptized at two years old, and then beginning to go back to what you can’t even remember...It’s like an *infection*’ (187, italics mine). Confronted with these two statements, Bendrix is at once reminded of something Sarah wrote in the letter he received after her death: ‘I’ve caught belief like a *disease*. I’ve fallen into belief like I fell in love’ (147, italics mine). The existential opposition between human free will and divine predetermination, on which I commented in the previous chapter, is arguably incorporated into this image of disease, and it makes Bendrix tremble with fear:

It wasn’t you that ‘took’, I told the God I didn’t believe in, that imaginary God whom Sarah thought had saved my life (for what conceivable purpose?) and who had ruined even in his non-existence the only deep happiness I had ever experienced: oh no, it wasn’t you that took, for that would have been magic and I believe in magic even less than I believe in You: magic is your cross, your resurrection of the body, your holy Catholic church, your communion of saints.
I lay on my back and watched the shadows of the Common trees shift on my ceiling. It’s just a coincidence, I thought, a horrible coincidence that nearly brought her back at the end to You. You can’t mark a two-year-old child for life with a bit of water and a prayer. If I began to believe that, I could believe in the body and the blood. You didn’t own her all those years: I owned her. You won in the end, You don’t need to remind me of that, but she wasn’t deceiving me with You when she lay here with me, on this bed, with this pillow under her back. When she slept, I was with her, not You. It was I who penetrated her, not You. (164-165)

Part of Bendrix’s worrying here is his jealousy, and I believe it is rewarding to pause for a while and consider a much earlier incident of the novel. When Bendrix visits Mr Savage, the ‘specialist who dealt in only one disease of which he knew every symptom’ (21), he feels like a patient ‘sick enough to try the famous shock treatment for jealousy’ (20). Suggesting that Bendrix’s jealousy is a disease – which it seemingly is, as Bendrix

becomes almost exhausted by it – Greene exploits this further when he invokes the old notion of God as a ‘jealous God’: ‘Jealousy, or so I have always believed, exists only with desire. The Old Testament writers were fond of using the words “a jealous God”, and perhaps it was their rough and oblique way of expressing belief in the love of God for man’ (42). Thus, it seems possible to claim that it is God’s jealousy which has ‘taken’ Sarah either like a vaccination, considered from a positive point of view, or, negatively, like an infection, as Henry believes. Bendrix’s predicament, then, is that he cannot compete with something that just ‘takes’ like that. God’s jealousy seems forcefully manifest and yet too vague and intangible for him to fight. Nevertheless, he puts up a good fight, as we have already seen, for he hits the mark when he asserts of himself that he is ‘as strong as a horse’ (147). Towards the end of this chapter I shall elaborate more on what I see as Bendrix’s predicament. As for now, I want to draw attention to Bendrix’s search for a beginning, something which is partly triggered by his meeting with Mrs Bertram.

To search for a beginning relates in a very direct way to incorporating plot into one’s life. Much has been said already about plot in the previous chapter, but I believe some additional comments are in order. In Western culture, attempts to make time cohere continue to be drawn from the biblical view of temporality, as Kermode sees it in *The Sense of an Ending*. This notion of time is concerned with beginnings and endings; it is broken into periods of significance (*kairos*) and is different from the undifferentiated, continuous flow (*chronos*). The beginning of a period of *kairos* is identified by the occurrence of an event that makes a difference in our lives, and the ending is marked by a resolution and return to a routine. *Kairos* ‘is the season, a point in time filled with significance, charged with a meaning derived from its relation to the end’ (Kermode 1981: 47). Seen in isolation, the incident from the fatal night of June 1944 to Sarah’s subsequent break with Bendrix can, for instance, be considered a period of *kairos*. But what is so

special about Bendrix's meeting with Mrs Bertram is that he starts to spot the contour of the overarching period of *kairos* in Sarah's life, the beginning being obviously her baptism at the age of two and the resolution her leap into a faith in God and, finally, a leap through death to her new 'lover.' It sounds almost impossible to him, but when he lies on the floor with Sarah's children's books and tries 'to trace at least a few features in the blank spaces of Sarah's life,' because there 'are times when a lover longs to be also a father and a brother: he is jealous of the years he hasn't shared' (172), the picture appears clearer to him:

Even the deaths were 'period', and 'period' too was the school girl who marked the pages with lines, exclamation marks, who wrote neatly in the margin of Scott's last letter home: 'And what comes next? Is it God? Robert Browning.' Even then, I thought, *He* came into her mind. He was as underhand as a lover, taking advantage of a passing mood, like a hero seducing us with his improbabilities and his legends. I put the last book back and turned the key in the lock. (173, original emphasis)

Looking back at 'the blank spaces of Sarah's life,' Bendrix again and again finds God as symptoms of the disease she was infected with when baptised. With his 'great schemes' (191) God seems to force himself upon Bendrix's consciousness as the great puppet master, who, whenever he finds it convenient, can pull this or that string, ruining 'happiness like a harvester ruins a mouse's nest' (191). It has been as easy for God to take Sarah away from Bendrix as it would have been easy for Bendrix to have taken Sylvia from Waterbury, the critic (156). In this period of *kairos* in Sarah's life, Bendrix has only played the minor part; it is God who stands at the centre of events, to Bendrix's disappointment and frustration.

Having found God in memory, as the centre of the significant past, Bendrix moves into what I have called the dialectics between movement and stasis, and I shall start exploring this proposition by once again returning to the opening of the novel.

Movement and Stasis

In his essay called “‘The Dangerous Edge’: Beginning with Death,’ Alan Warren Friedman surveys the eschatology of Greene’s fiction, claiming: ‘Graham Greene’s is a post-mortem fiction: his novels commonly begin with or presume death and then circle back to that originating end as if time had stuck there and only a repetition of doom were possible’ (Friedman 1990: 131). In a very curious way this reverberates Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Storyteller,’ where he intriguingly claims that ‘[d]eath is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death’ (Benjamin 2000: 19). These two quotes succinctly pinpoint the mood and atmosphere we are confronted with at the opening of *The End of the Affair*. For not only does Bendrix’s account begin with the end, that is his present situation of 1949, it also depicts how he perceives existence as spiritually and artistically barren, with a complete absence of a direction and a purpose to life. Death confronts him at once as something attractive and as something he has to deny. And it is in this vacuum, within these seemingly narrow boundaries between acceptance and avoidance of death, that Bendrix finds sanction and authority for writing his story.

Furthermore, death is presumed at yet another level of the opening chapter.

Towards the end of it, when Sarah returns from her walk and finds Bendrix together with Henry, death is again highlighted:

‘It’s a filthy night,’ I said accusingly, and Henry added with apparent anxiety, ‘You’re wet through, Sarah. One day you’ll catch your death of cold.’
A *cliché* with its popular wisdom can sometimes fall through a conversation like a note of doom, yet even if we had known he spoke the truth, I wonder if either of us would have felt any genuine anxiety for her break through our nerves, distrust, and hate. (18, original emphasis)

Instead of letting this passage work as a typical literary prolepsis, making the reader speculate whether Sarah will die or not, Greene makes his writing protagonist dismiss any

such speculation at once. Sarah will die, we learn, even though such a confirmation runs at the expense of suspense. What is of importance is not that Sarah will die – Bendrix does not write primarily to entertain his readers with suspense – but what Sarah’s death has generated. Death appears again as the motivator and lender of authority.

Bendrix’s emphasis and focus on ‘the end’ is fascinatingly manifest and underscored on many levels of the story. His experience as a writer, for instance, has taught him that so ‘much of a novelist’s writing...takes place in the unconscious: in those depths *the last word* is written before the first’ (35, italics mine). Even when we consider his rather peculiar habits as a reader this end-focus is accentuated. When he receives the letter from Mr Parkis, in which Mr Parkis explains how his boy was healed by the ‘memento’ of Sarah, Bendrix reads the last sentences first and then returns to the beginning afterwards (177). And the way he reads Sarah’s diary is certainly not an exception: ‘For it was the last couple of pages I read first, and I read them again at the end to make sure’ (88). Consequently, it all adds to show that ‘the end’ pervades the whole of the protagonist’s existence.

For Bendrix has come to the end of existence. He is ‘beginning to doubt whether anything [he] can do will ever alter the course of events’ (66), and he comes to realise that it is in fact he who is the ‘imprisoned image’ and not Christ hanging on the cross in that church at the corner of Park Road. Returning to his home where the pivotal scene of the novel once took place, Bendrix sees existence for what it is: ‘I looked at the hall, clear as a *cell*, hideous with *green* paint, and I thought, she wanted me to have a second chance and here it is: the *empty life*, *odourless*, *antiseptic*, *the life of a prison*, and I accused her as though her prayers had really worked the change: what did I do to you that you had to condemn me to life?’ (145, italics mine). Even the way Greene ingeniously plays with the colour of life – green – making Bendrix conceive of that colour as something detestable,

manifests in a forceful way how much Bendrix has come to deplore existence. This artistic technique is again exploited by Greene towards the end of the novel when Bendrix and Henry walk over the Common towards the Pontefract Arms: 'the lights were out, and lovers met where the roads intersected, and on the other side of the *grass* was the house with the ruined steps where He gave me back this hopeless crippled life' (191, italics mine). To stay alive does not imply the same as to embrace life to Bendrix. He recognises life all around him with all its green and all its grass, where love continues where roads intersect, but where he is barred from embracing it, imprisoned as he is in his crippled existence.

I have titled this thesis 'Tied to the Pendulum's Swing' because I find that it describes and captures the essence of Bendrix's predicament and his project, 'The End of the Affair,' in an interesting way. Perhaps we should let Bendrix speak for himself: 'the pendulum of my desire swung tiringly to and fro, the desire to forget and to remember, to be dead and to keep alive a while longer' (140). It is striking that it is within these extremes, within this dichotomous psychic space, Bendrix moves. To see this – and since Bendrix's predicament is rewardingly explained from that point of departure – let us once again consider Bendrix's comment that he is 'writing this account of her, trying to get her out of [his] system for ever (58): If Bendrix can get Sarah out of his system, he fulfils his uttermost desire to get God out of his system, since God is always at the centre of his memories of Sarah. However, that is only possible in death and annihilation of memory, and as such, death confronts Bendrix as something desirable. But because of the possibility that God, the enemy who ironically robbed Bendrix of all life by giving it back to him, may be whom he confronts when he moves beyond that temporal veil which comprises death, Bendrix finds it necessary to postpone death. All there is left is time, where neither the past, the present or the future – or whatever temporal dimension there will be beyond

death – is redeemable, as Eliot's persona so fittingly puts it. Just as there is movement on the swing of the pendulum, there is movement in memory (the chronotope of the road) and movement in Bendrix's narrative constructions of the past (the chronotope of threshold), but the rest of his existence constitutes only a positional stasis bound to time. Bendrix's is a catch-22 situation where life is stuck in limbo, and where his only final weapon is a prayer to God to leave him alone for an eternity (192). But to what purpose, he does not know.

Chapter 5: Concluding Remarks

*They've changed everything now. We used to think there was a beginning and a middle and an end. We believed in the Aristotelian theory.*⁹

At every moment of his life, every human being is his own journey, and the only temporal and spatial point of the journey he can define with a certain accuracy is the end – the actual here and now. The rest of the journey is accumulated and stored in memory. Every human being is his own memory, he is his own narrative, and that narrative constitutes his own identity. Besides his memory, on which his whole being is dependent, he only knows death for certain. *The End of the Affair* is a narrative journey which curiously enough starts with the end and moves backwards in time, in search for its own beginning. Furthermore, there is a sense in which it ends where it begins, with the frustrated and purposeless position of Maurice Bendrix, the narrator: it is a circular story. In his investigation into the modernist short story, Dominic Head maintains that the ‘modernist circular, or spiral story, is usually an exploration of disunity’ (Head 1992: 11), and as such, I believe he lends a fair description to *The End of the Affair*. The novel concerns a narrator who despairingly tries to narrate his own past and, implicitly, his own self. The disunity, however, stems from the utter impossibility and futility of the protagonist’s taking on such a project. Ironically, it is memory and narrative which comprise the impassable obstacles which prevent Bendrix from reaching his much desired goal.

Greene has effectively set his novel in times of war and peace in order to enhance the dichotomy which pervades the story on so many different levels. Another crucial

⁹ Thomas Hardy, recorded in Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* (New York, 1954), p. 136; quoted in Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space*, p. 31.

spatial element of the novel, which also underscores this dichotomy, is the pervasive usage of the motif of the pursuit. Both these, I have made a claim for, have a reflective quality attached to them, in the sense that they allude to the interior violence and pursuits taking place within the characters. Additionally, attention has been drawn to the juxtaposition of what I have called experiential temporalities, especially to the different ways Sarah and Bendrix experience time. By doing so, Bendrix appears as a character who cannot keep up with, or understand the workings of, time – time leaves him out of control. However, the bitterness and anger he projects on time motivates the temporal manipulation we confront in his narrative. Like the movement of the pendulum's swing, Bendrix's narrative fluctuates between the present and the past, continually moving backwards and forwards across the chronological span of the action. It has led me to conclude that what he is writing is partly a diatribe against time. Sarah, on the other hand, is the embracer of the present, and it is significant, I have claimed, that it is she who experiences the epiphany of the novel. Hers has been a momentary discovery of God.

Bendrix's route towards God is totally different. As I have argued in my fourth chapter, memory constitutes the thematic and structural centre of both the frame narrative and the embedded narrative. As far as the latter is concerned, it deals with how Bendrix comes to a recognition of, and a rather idiosyncratic belief in, God. In a comparable way to St Augustine's conviction that memory comprises the bridge between time and eternity, I have proposed that our protagonist finds God in memory. In a specific way this discovery relates to the metonymical quality of space. Given an encounter with memory, space inheres the possibility to invoke different temporalities of our lives. In Bendrix's case, the spatial surroundings point emphatically towards Sarah and, in the final analysis, towards God. If *The End of the Affair* is considered as an overall expression of Bendrix's memory, it is illustrative that the extracts from Sarah's diary are placed at the physical centre of the

novel, and, furthermore, that her epiphanic moment comprises the significant centre of those. God *is* the apotheosis of Bendrix's memory. From Bendrix's point of view, God is perceived as being an active character intervening in human affairs, and, as such, he cannot stay remote and neutral towards Him: a stance of existential importance needs to be taken.

The embedded narrative and the novel end at this point, but, curiously enough, it also begins there. The three years of silence, one must presume, must have consisted of this existential predicament which finally escalates into 'The End of the Affair.' By analysing the opening of the novel, I have pointed to several aspects which strongly connect with memory and narrative. Every narrative shares the property of having a physical beginning: the textual fabric has to start somewhere. However, in terms of content, each narrative has its very own beginning. What Bendrix does in his opening is to raise the question of whether the content with which he starts his own narrative – and the narrative, we need to remind ourselves, is one of autobiography – is arbitrarily or consciously chosen, and I have claimed that the problem is fundamentally one which belongs to memory itself. Memory, which is the present accumulation of things past, has to compromise with narrative, which is a physically temporal succession, by defining a point of departure. To some extent, this point can be consciously chosen, but, more often than not, the point has got a touch of arbitrariness attached to it. *The End of the Affair* is a search in memory for the significant past events which comprise the 'plot' of the protagonist's life – it is a search for the self. Since there can be no defined beginning of one's memory and no defined beginning of one's self, there will always be doubt whether one's narrative opening is arbitrary or not. From only *one* possible narrative beginning follows only one possible beginning of memory and the self, and that is in itself a utopian thought.

Furthermore, we have seen how Greene adds a transcendental element to this already riveting opening by setting up the existential opposition between human free will

and divine predetermination. When Bendrix speculates whether his opening is chosen by God or by himself, he actually ponders the question of whether the human self is self-defined or not. If Bendrix's self is self-defined, it means that he has been in control of his own past. However, when he looks back over the fields of his own past, he realises that it is not he but God who has been pulling this or that string to His end. God emerges to Bendrix's mind as a superior Artist, up against whose plot he is left totally helpless.

Next, by addressing complexes like genre and motivation, I have proposed that *The End of the Affair* is a sort of autobiography which most likely is intended for publishing. As we have seen, this enables us to incorporate various aspects of the text into the protagonist's underlying intentions with his narrative. Not only is his project an effort to understand his past and a diatribe against time, it is also an idiosyncratic expression of a confessional mind who seeks atonement for his misdoings. This runs intriguingly parallel to the anger he directs at God: Bendrix's belief in God is equally proportioned between love and hate. *The End of the Affair* reverses the analogy of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914), in which Stephen Dedalus rejects religious metaphysics in order to embrace belief in the aesthetics of art. Bendrix has come to an end of his belief in art; he sees it for what it is: trivial and unimportant. Love seems long gone, and it all adds to emphasise that Bendrix has come to an end of existence – in a sense, he is spiritually dead. While fighting the transcendental, he can only await death.

Bendrix's predicament is that, as he has come the end of everything, he despairingly desires death, since it would imply annihilation of memory. To stay alive means to drag with him a memory which is only pregnant with reminders of Sarah and God. However, since a possible outcome of death would be to confront his superior opponent face to face, death has to be postponed. Neither acceptance nor denial of death can provide him with a satisfactory denouement. As far as Bendrix is concerned, he loses

either way. Bendrix is tied to the pendulum's swing, he is suspended in time and forced to a specific movement which constitutes nothing but a 'running to stand still.' Bendrix moves continually between extremes, back and forth between war and peace, love and hate, belief and disbelief, rejection and acceptance. There is movement in memory and movement in narrative, but the grand fact to which this movement points is that Bendrix's is a case of positional stasis.

I began this thesis by drawing on Olney's claim that 'an agonized search for the self, through the mutually reflexive acts of memory and narrative, accompanied by the haunting fear that it is impossible from the beginning but also impossible to give over, is the very emblem of our time.' In a riveting way, *The End of the Affair* portrays how its protagonist is compelled to embark upon such an impossible quest. The quest is completely unobtainable not only because memory and narrative are epistemologically and ontologically problematic, but also because memory has been intruded upon by a transcendental element. Since God is the apotheosis of his memory, Bendrix cannot 'find' his own self. The irony of the novel is that the faculty of memory and the medium of narrative, which at the same time motivate and enable this search, are also the factors which prevent the desired resolution to the project.

In the introductory chapter I mentioned that Greene, in a curious way, was attracted to death, and that his was a life lived on the perilous border. The awareness of death seems to have been present to his mind constantly. Confrontations with death, whether it was when almost dying from sickness, journeying through Liberia, when 'enjoying' the dangers of the three blitzes on London, or the many journeys he undertook with the possibility of being ambushed, always resulted in literary achievements, one way or another. It is fair to claim, it seems to me, that Greene, as a storyteller, borrowed his authority from death, to evoke the words of Walter Benjamin. As also Norman Sherry has

noted, the parallel to Bendrix is striking (Sherry 1989: *xxii*). Bendrix too is confronted with death; the *end* stands before him as attractive and yet terrifying. With no hope for the future, he can only embrace the past, or rather, the present of things past, which is memory. In an effort to define his self, death lends him authority, and the narrative scheme lends him the medium to make it manifest. His mission is not accomplished, but it certainly is a decent try.

At the back of my edition of the novel William Faulkner is quoted, maintaining *The End of the Affair* is ‘one of the most true and moving novels of my time, in anybody’s language.’ Why is it true, and why is it moving? one might ask. Perhaps because it concerns one of the basic needs of human existence: to have significance. Every human being is a story, and, in the light of death, a human being needs that story to be of importance.

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